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# **"Not Quite a Peck of P—s."**

**A DOMESTIC STORY FOR GIRLS**

**BY**

**"SATOR"**

**AUTHOR OF "TRIFLES LIGHT AS AIR," &C.**

**"TRUST IN THE LORD AND DO GOOD, SO SHALT THOU DWELL IN THE  
LAND, AND VERILY THOU SHALT BE FED."**



**LONDON  
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL AND CO.  
LIVERPOOL: EDWARD HOWELL.  
1881.**

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## P R E F A C E .

It may be interesting to some of my readers to know, that the title of this book has a story to it : and is the result of—shall I say—inspiration, or a dream.

“ Your story displays ability, and has much merit, but time, care, and many alterations will be needed, before it is fit for publication,” said a kindly critic after wading through some 600 pages of uncorrected mss. Suppose you leave it for a time, and try a shorter one ; don’t be discouraged, ‘ Rome was not built in a day.’ ” This I knew to be correct, as a historical fact, still, I *was* discouraged, and retired to rest, feeling depressed, and unlike story writing.

Waking up in early morning I saw—or thought I saw—in large letters on the wall before me—

**“Not Quite a Peck of P—s.”**

CHAPTER I.

PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE, AND WHAT THEY CAN ACHIEVE.

And in a corner of the room, a Christmas Tree, with Peas suspended, as described at the close of this story, while in illuminated letters, were again the words

**“Not Quite a Peck of P—s.”**

Filled with wonder, I arose, and made a note of what I had seen, and before the day was over I had drawn out a sketch of the first portion of this story, which, now completed, I offer to a generous public, trusting that it may be approved.

**“SATOR.”**

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# “Not Quite a Peck of P—s.”

## CHAPTER I.

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PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE—AND WHAT THEY CAN  
ACHIEVE.

“ONE !—Two !—Three !—Four !”—chimed the clock in the old ivy-covered church tower. There had been no rain for weeks, and the hot July sun poured on the thirsty earth its fiery rays, reducing the covering of the highway to an impalpable powder, which quietly awaited the coming breeze to be whirled into the air, filling the eyes of unfortunate wayfarers with its grittiness. But no dust had as yet marred the brightness of a tiny rose-covered cottage, in which sat a small girl, her face flushed,—partly with impatience, partly with the summer heat.

“It’s no good, Flo !” (rendered ‘Fo’) said the

child, speaking angrily, "this nasty, horrid knitting won't go right!" Flo is a white woolly poodle,—so fluffy, it is almost impossible to distinguish her head from her tail, except for her bright eyes, that sparkle behind the tangle of wool like fireflies in a hedgerow—a loving affectionate doggie, who, seeing her mistress' disturbed face, and wishing to express her sympathy, sprang up to lick the end of the tiny nose.

A most unfortunate proceeding it proved to be, causing the child to start, and oh, sad to tell! drag out her needle. "It is the last straw that breaks the camel's back," and the dropped stitches were to little Mabel that last straw. Starting up with an energy worthy of a better cause, she flung her knitting, with its bright scarlet ball, as far away as her small strength would allow. Flo, thinking it was intended as a prelude to a game of romps, scampered after it, barking with great glee; but finding she was not joined by the merry feet of her little mistress, she turned back, and was distressed to see her lying, face

downwards, on the grass, sobbing as if her heart would break. This was more than any tender-hearted dog could be expected to bear silently ; so, planting her forepaws on the little bowed head, Flo raised her pink nose appealingly to the blue sky, and howled piteously.

“Od’s bobs, Miss Mabel, and what’s all this about, I should like to know?” exclaimed a neat-looking old woman, who appeared on the scene, attracted by the unmusical duet. She had bright black eyes, and smooth grey hair, tucked tidily under a muslin cap, the opaque whiteness of its frilling contrasting strangely with her yellow wrinkled face. Yet it was a kindly face, a face that tempted you to trust in, and cling to, the owner of it. Mabel thought so, as jumping up she flung her little arms round the yellow wrinkled neck and sobbed.

“It’s the nasty, horrid knitting, nurse. I promised sister I would do ten rows ; but the needles got sticky, and first one stitch go’ed, and then another, and now the needle’s gone altogether ! so



I frowed it away, and sister will be wexed. I wish I could do fings like sister, without any trouble."

"Eh, my lamb! but you'll have to pick a peck of p—s before you're like Miss Mary," said the old woman, smoothing the tossed wiggie and kissing the little troubled face. "Go and bring me the knitting, I'll put it to rights; and just you take Flo and run to the bottom of the lane, sister 'll be here in five minutes." Glad of the permission, away scampered the child, followed by Flo barking noisily.

While Mabel is waiting for her sister, we may explain that Mary and Mabel Annesly, to use old Hannah's words, were "Orphans a'most." Their father, at one time a well-to-do merchant, after a few years of wild speculation and bitter disappointment, had sailed for Australia, hoping to retrieve his fortune at the Gold Fields, and had not since been heard of. Their poor mother, broken in health and spirits, vainly attempting to struggle through an accumulating mass of trouble, succumbed.

"The power of evil, the power of evil, it quite

frightens me," she said, burying her face in the pillow of the bed, which she never again left, though she lingered for months. Mary, then a girl of sixteen, was ceaseless in her loving endeavours to comfort her sick mother, and attend to the little Mabel, a delicate child of nearly two years. Born in the midst of trouble, she seemed impregnated with it ; she never attempted to talk, and her fretful moan of "me me, me me," was most distressing to hear. Poor Mary was quite worn out endeavouring to amuse and soothe her ; and so weak had she become with insufficient food and want of rest, that even Mabel's feather-like weight was a burden almost too great for her to bear. Still, she battled with her weakness and her weariness, and kept smiles and loving words for both her loved ones.

"Don't cry, mother dear, don't cry ; God will raise up a friend for us in our hour of need," she said one day when her mother appeared weaker and more depressed than usual ; but though she tried to speak hopefully, her heart was heavy

within her. "Oh, God help me," she cried, and felt her prayer was answered when old Hannah appeared.

Hannah Bolt had nursed Mrs. Annesly, and the faithful creature loved her as if she were her own child. She knew that things were not as bright as she could wish them to be, but she had no idea of the bitter trouble they were in.

"Thank God, I'm in time, my dears!" said the kindly old woman wiping her eyes. "Somethin' told me you were awantin' me, so I just left th' key with old Betty, as lives at th' back you know, puts meself into a third class carriage, and here I am, my dears; and not a bit too soon—not a bit too soon," she repeated to herself in a low tone. "I'm glad I brought my savin's with me, thought they might come in useful like," communing with herself as she examined her pocket to make sure her treasured money was safe.

"A cur'us purse, isn't it, Miss Mary?" said Hannah, pulling a child's sock out of her pocket. "Thy mother wore it, and the fellow of it got lost

in th' mud long ago, when she and I had gone down to low water mark at Southport. We might a' bin lost too—but the Lord saved us, and I've allays kept this sock, and allays will." Casting her eyes round the poverty-stricken room, she sighed, and continued, "Eh! dear dear, but times is changed since then!"

For a few moments she seemed lost in reverie, then starting up briskly exclaimed, "But this wunnot do, no use greeting o'er spilt milk! Things mun be redd up a bit!" Setting to work with a will, the effect was magical.

"Oh! the delight of having some one capable about me, and oh! how good she is," thought Mary, as with a feeling combining gratitude and awe, she watched old Hannah preparing the tea.

"How could she know our need? God must have guided her," thought Mary, as Hannah, taking a snowy cloth from a reticule, spread it carefully on the table, at the same time saying:

"No offence, I hope, my dear, but I am making meself at home ye see; trust old Hannah for

knowin' what's needed in a time o' sickness. Invalids allays fancies things as haven't bin in th' house long, and thy dear mother did like a cup of old Hannah's tea." Pretending not to know that the tea caddy and the larder were all but empty.

"I've got a drop of cream, a sweet bread, a bit o' butter, an' a nice home-made cake, so we'll see if we can't tempt thy dear mother's appetite. Dear dear, but its a real pleasure to cook for quality agen! You mun excuse me, if I seem a bit countryfied like, for ye see I'm cast among decent unfashionable people just now."

Hannah didn't stop to consider whether she was imputing indecency to fashionable people; she was only anxious to put herself and her dear ladies at ease, and Mary was too weary to cavil at words.

"How nice and snug you look, mother dear," said Mary, with a sigh of relief as she watched her mother who, with a pretty colour in her cheeks, was eating with evident enjoyment the dainty meal prepared by nurse.

“God has sent our friend at last, hasn’t He, darling mother?” The expression of Mrs. Annesly’s face was almost seraphic, as clasping her thin hands, she replied :

“Yes, thank God! I can sleep in peace now. How good that tea was, nurse! and how comfortable you make my pillows. Kiss me, Mary, you dear, good child, take care of little Mabel, mother’s precious lamb,” said she, stretching out her weak arms and fondly encircling the baby form. “Good night, dear old nurse, I think I shall sleep till morning, I feel so content!—so content!” and the weary head nestled in the pillows, made “so comfortable” by nurse, and the much tried mother slept.

Nurse gave Mary and Mabel their tea and put them to bed, and then sat and watched by the pillow of her foster child. Watched the fitful slumbers of that poor tired soul, whom the “Power of Evil” had so frightened, that she was unable longer to fight the “Battle of Life.” All night she watched patiently, and then as morning

dawned, the sufferer's eyes opened wide, and stretching out her arms, she cried in clear ringing tones :

"I'm coming, mother ! I am so glad, I shall not be frightened—any—more—" gradually the voice ceases, and without a sigh, the troubled spirit passed away to the land where there is no sin and no sorrow.

" Best so, best so," sobbed faithful Hannah, "though I little thought I should have to close thy eyes, my lamb ! Thou wasn't fit for this moiling and toiling world, and the Lord saw it and took thee to a better ; but whatever will become o' thy two gels ? Pretty creturs ! they shanna pine for a lovin' word or a crust while *I* live. Old Hannah can give 'em that, an' proud to do it too."

Poor Mary was heartbroken when she woke and found herself motherless, and in the first bitterness of grief reproached Hannah for letting her go to sleep.

" You should have called me, nurse, you should have called me."

“Where was t’ good, dear heart! where was t’ good?” said old Hannah earnestly. “Thy mother took her farewell o’ thee and gave thee thy work, when she called thee ‘a good child’ and told thee to ‘take care o’ th’ little un’, poor wee lamb! Don’t fret so, don’t, or tha’ll mak’ a babbie o’ me. Tha may think o’ her dying words wi’ comfort all thy days, that tha’ may. She’s trusted thee with th’ care o’ th’ bairn, and tha’ll not be strong to mind it, if tha’ frets so—but there—it’s easy talking—I don’t wonder at thee—oh! my lamb, my lamb, to think that thou should’st go first.” Covering her face with her apron, old Hannah sat rocking herself, silently battling with her grief.

But the grief of the aged, over dear ones gone before, is more evanescent than when in the fulness of youth. Either time blunts their feelings, or the sure prospect of a speedy meeting consoles them.

After a few moments old Hannah rose from her chair, wiped her eyes, smoothed down her



apron, and moved about the room calm and serene.

“A very pillar of strength” Mary felt her to be ; and by degrees she checked her bitter sobs, for she found they frightened her little Mabel, (now doubly hers) and as she soothed her little sister, she thanked God for giving her something to live for ; and through the desolation and heartbreaking misery of the next few days, Mary bore herself bravely, for Mabel’s sake.

Hannah’s much loved sock was nearly emptied of its savings, before she and her dear young ladies were safely settled at Rose Cottage—a pretty home in a lane near the church, and in the summer a perfect bower of roses, both red and white. Hannah’s occupation as a clear starcher brought her in a pretty tidy sum weekly, and in addition she had an annuity of thirty pounds left her by Mrs. Annesly’s father ; altogether she was looked up to by the neighbours as ‘well to do.’ The arrival of nurse, with two young ladies, created quite an excitement, and many were the means tried to discover whether they were well dowered

—but old Hannah gave all to understand that “they was hinfants at present, wait till they’s of age, an’ then,” and a mysterious nod completed her innocent deception ‘of outsiders’ as she called them. To her own particular friend and adviser, Dr. Grey, she explained matters fully.

“I cannot possibly live upon you, nurse, I must earn some money,” Mary had said; but like many another before her, she found that the will to earn, is not always immediately followed by the power. Patience does much, and Perseverance does more, and Mary’s nature was essentially both Patient and Persevering; so she helped Hannah with her ironing, and other household duties, devoting every spare hour to study; hoping against hope that something would turn up.

Little Mabel was the greatest delight to her; the bright sunshine and sweet flowers acted like a charm on the delicate child. The little limbs gained strength, and the mind cheerfulness. The wailing ceased, and she began to talk in her own peculiar way, she even attempted a little gymnastic

exercise, of a very mild form, to the great amusement of Hannah and her devoted admirer Dr. Grey, a bright-eyed, white-haired, rosy faced gentleman of sixty.

It was very laughable to see the tiny creature mount a buffet, look gravely round, and say impressively, "Wha me Bhu," then stepping down, daintily trip across the room, ending with the tiniest skip, with the tiniest of feet, smile sweetly, to express her appreciation of the admiration her wonderful feat of agility had excited, then gravely repeat the performance, being particular to repeat also the magic words "Wha me Bhu," which being interpreted, meant "Watch me jump."

"The conceit of the darling!" said the good Doctor, rubbing his hands with delight; "she really imagines she can jump across the room."

"I really believe she does," said Mary, laughing; "but isn't she growing lovely? her features are so delicately formed, and her hair is just the color of a ripe horse chestnut."

"Ah! but her eyes are her chief beauty,"

interrupted Dr. Grey, enthusiastically, "they are like pools of love or laughter! But we must not let her hear us admiring her," added he, after a slight pause, "for her mind is developing rapidly. Did you notice the remark she made on my little nephew, when he said, (alluding to his new sister), "I don't like babies, they are always kying and scweaming."

"How fu fu that lilly b— bhoy do tor!" said Miss Mabel, with the dignity of an Eastern Princess.

"Funny, he talks funny, does he? I wonder what he thinks about your lingo, eh, Miss Mab?" said I laughing, but she only gazed wonderingly at me, with her deep dark eyes. She will want very careful training, will that little woman; her very remark proves how quick she will be to see faults in others, while she is blind to her own. But here she comes, the little witch! Now I'm off. I'll bring her back in an hour or two."

It had become quite a habit with Dr. Grey to call for Mabel two or three times a week.

"Carriage exercise is good for her," he said;

even when it rained he called, and took the child to his wife, "for she has stolen our hearts, and we cannot do without a peep at her."

Indeed the kind-hearted childless couple enjoyed her so much, that they quite wondered how they had managed to exist before they knew her.

Still, nothing turned up for Mary to do; and she was beginning to lose heart.

"It is always the darkest the hour before dawn," says the song, and so it proved in Mary's case. One morning when she was feeling very miserable, Dr. Grey rushed in in great excitement.

"I've heard of something good at last! My friend, Lady Vicars, wants a governess; hers has to leave at once: mother sick—or sister married—or something of that kind. I think you'll do to take her place; for though your shoulders are young, you have a pretty old head firmly planted upon them. So pop on your hat and come with me. 'Strike the iron while it's hot,' that's my motto." Indeed so quickly was everything

done, that Mary was sitting in Lady Vicar's pretty morning room, before she had time to collect her scattered thoughts.

"This is my young friend, Lady Vicars, I can recommend her strongly. I only wish I had half-a-dozen youngsters of my own, I wouldn't let you have her," said Dr. Grey, with the freedom of an old friend, for he had known the lady all her life.

"Thank you very much, Doctor, for your unselfish kindness. I can believe she deserves all your praise," replied Lady Vicars, turning to Mary, and regarding her kindly, "but I am afraid she is too young."

Poor Mary's heart misgave her, as with a little deprecating smile she faltered—

"I don't think I have felt *very* young for some years, and I am very fond of children."

"Poor child!" thought Lady Vicars, "what a life you must have had!" but aloud she enquired, "Pray how old may you be?"

"Nearly seventeen," replied Mary, wishing she could honestly pronounce herself "twenty."

"I thought you could not be more, well, I withdraw my objection to your youth, as it is a fault that will decrease daily; but I warn you that my children are young pickles; I had intended engaging an older governess, who would be very strict with them. Do you think you would be able to keep them in order?"

"Try me, please, I don't think I shall fail; I have always found children and animals obedient and loving."

There was nothing conceited about Mary as she said this, she merely stated it as a fact, without taking any credit to herself for it, but she looked so wistful, as she sat waiting for the verdict, that Lady Vicar's kind heart was touched, and she decided "That it would be fair to give her a trial."

"How pretty she is," said Mary, "if the children resemble her, I shall love them dearly."

"Because they are pretty?" queried Dr. Grey.

"Not entirely—I ought to have said how good she is! There is an indescribable something about her that I like very much."

“Yes, I am sure you will get on capitally with her, and the children are charming; and now for a word of advice, you are to commence your duties to-morrow at nine, *mind you are to time*. I admire your patience and perseverance, see if you can add another ‘p’ and be punctual.”

Promising to remember all his good advice, Mary bid him farewell, for he had calls to make, and walked towards home feeling very happy. All nature appeared to rejoice with her.

“God is good; the perfumed flower,  
The smiling fields and dark green wood,  
The insect, fluttering for an hour—  
All things proclaim, that God is good!”

“Dear mother,” thought Mary, “she taught me those lines, and how true they are! Can she see me now, I wonder? and does she rejoice with me too? I like to think that she does. I like to feel that her spirit is hovering near me, and surely it cannot be wrong?”

It is now two years since Mary commenced her duties, to a kind heart she added a firm will, her



little pupils doat upon her, and her "Patience and Perseverance" are unfailing.

"I won the race! Sister Mary, I won the race, Flo had to stop to get her breff," she meant breath, "I was to you first!" cried Mabel, as she jumped into her sister's extended arms.

"I think, Flo stopped to say 'How d'ye do' to a friend," said Mary, kissing the sweet lips whose broken English was the delight of her life. "Has my wee girl been good? Finished her knitting?"

"Oh! Mary, I so sorry!" and the little face clouded visibly, "but the needles were naughty and wouldn't go right when I telled them, so I got waxed and frowned them away."

"Lost your Patience, eh! little woman? that was a pity! My little girlie must learn to be Patient and Persevere."

"And pick peas for dinner, nurse says so," said the child, nodding her head knowingly.

"Pick a peck of p—s; but not for dinner, nurse meant something quite different—I am afraid I cannot make it clear to your little mind—Oh what

a cloud!" cried Mary, holding the little face against her breast to shield it from the dust that just then whirl'd past in desperate haste, as if, now that it was once dislodged from the ground, it was bound to go a certain distance in the shortest possible time, before it found a resting place on tall tree or hedgerow.

"There, it has passed! You may open your eyes now, we shall be in our garden before another cloud reaches us. Look at the leaves, they are turning their backs to us, a sure sign of rain, and here it comes," as a drop the size of a shilling fell upon Mabel's upturned face, causing that small maiden to open her mouth to try to catch it.

"That's what the fisses do—isn't it funny?" said she, "you should say, 'Dood morning, 'ittle fissy, does your muvver know you're out?' thats what Johnnie Grey says."

Poor Mary felt a tightening round her heart as she kissed her little motherless sister: "Poor dear love," she thought, "I ought to be glad that I have been able to supply a mother's place to her,

she cannot miss a mother very much, or she could not say such things."

The rain drops were now falling quickly, so Mary hurried in, and while taking off her hat and brushing out the pretty hair, she said, "Do you remember what I was teaching you yesterday?"

"Oh yes, *I* know," said the child, "Cows and horses walk on,"—then after a pause to be quite sure that she made no mistake, added triumphantly, "*Free* legs!"

"Oh, you funny little woman," laughed Mary, "how often must I tell you four legs."

"P'raps I 'member next time, but *my* horse has got only *free* legs," said the child, anxious to prove that she was not very wrong.

"Because you broke one yesterday, count Jack's legs to-morrow and then you will be sure."

Jack was Dr. Grey's pony, and a great pet of Mabel's.

"How difficult it seems for Mabel to remember some things," said Mary that evening to her friend and adviser, Dr. Grey, who had just popped in, as

was his custom, to see all went well ; “ but she is quick enough at others. I have a pupil very like her, one thing seems to suggest another, and it is generally the wrong thing that she remembers ; for instance—to-day, after spending some time over a simple lesson in geography, this was the result :

*Ques.*—What is the county town of Hampshire ?

*Ans.*—‘ Winchester, on the — — Tickling — Smarting — Swelling — oh dear ! I know that it is something unpleasant,’ cried Julia, almost dislocating her fingers in her endeavours to assist her memory ; she felt she ought to have the word at her fingers’ end, and wanted to find which finger, I suppose, so that she might wring it out ; at last, ‘ Itchyn’ she shouted triumphantly. ‘ I said it was something unpleasant, didn’t I, Miss Mary ?’ and I couldn’t make her understand that she had done wrong, or was in any way to blame for not remembering it at first. She is so strangely excitable, too, I have to be very careful what I say to her.”

“You are quite right, my dear, and I think you manage them very nicely,” said Dr. Grey, as he wished her good evening, “Patience and Perseverance will clear your path from perplexities.”

## CHAPTER II.

---

### PUNCTUALITY PRAISED AND PITY MISPLACED.

THE rain which commenced the previous afternoon still continued to fall heavily. Not a break was to be seen in the leaden sky, which hung like a pall o'er the sad and tearful earth. Not even a crack for the jolly old sun to peep through, to let us know he was up, and had been travelling on our side of the globe for about three hours and a half.

“Dear heart alive!” said old Hannah, rubbing her eyes and appealing to the old clock, whose hands, though unequal in size, were for the moment in one mind, and both pointed to six.

“It never can be that time surely, I’ve heard tell of ‘Herrybusses,’ but this is the blackest one I ever see, for half-past six on a summer’s morn; it goes agen me to call Miss Mary, but a promise is a promise, and she does like to be ‘punctual.’”

Comforting herself with this thought, old Hannah popped on her cap, tied it comfortably under her chin, and with a quick noiseless step walked to the best bedroom and opened the door, both her charges were sleeping peacefully, and their kind-hearted guardian stood watching them with a tenderness that almost amounted to tears.

“What a pictur of love and beauty they do make, bless them,” said she softly, as she stooped to kiss first one and then the other. “The Lord has been mindful o’ my loneliness when He sent you to cheer me up in my old age. Good morning, sweetheart,” she said, as Mary opened her pretty blue eyes and smiled upon her, “but couldn’t you lay a bit?” continued she coaxingly. “No chance of a walk before breakfast; for it’s fair teemin’ again, just take a bit sleep till I have all snug for you in the parlour. I wouldn’t a’waken’d you only I feered you might be vexed.”

“Not vexed, nurse, I couldn’t be vexed with you,—but I do like to be up in good time. I have something I want to do; so the rain will be a good

excuse for staying indoors, but we won't wake Mabel, the darling!"

Half-an-hour afterwards Mary was busy with cardboard and water colours. Mabel's remark about picking peas for dinner had set her thinking how she could explain nurse's meaning, and she thought if she painted a pea on one side of a piece of cardboard, and printed a word on the other, it would help to amuse and instruct the child.

"What do you think of it, nurse?" asked Mary, exhibiting her handiwork.

"Natur itself! Why I feel as if I could shell it. I'm sure if you'd just put it on the table and said nothin', I should never a' known but what it was real! Eh, but you do grow like your mother! she was allays paintin' flowers and fruit beautiful."

"I am glad you like it," replied Mary. "It will please Mabel, I think, but I fear I shall never be able to paint like dear mother."

By the time breakfast was ready, Mary had painted four peas, and printed a word on the back of each, these she placed in a little basket, intending



to add to them from time to time, and then ran upstairs to rouse Mabel.

“Wake up, little one, the dark morning is making you heavy.”

“Then you can’t call me fezzzer any more, can you, Sister Mary? for fezzers are light,” said the child, making one of her sharp speeches; occasionally she surprised everybody by saying something really clever, while in other respects she was very babyish for her years.

“‘Heavy,’ means sleepy, little woman. I think I may call you ‘Feather’ for some time to come—jump!” and Mary held out her arms to catch the little creature; she was remarkably small for her age, tiny hands and feet, small well shaped head; indeed everything about her was small, except her eyes and her heart.

After breakfast Mary showed her the basket and its contents, and told her she must be quick and learn her letters, so that she might be able to spell the word on the back of each pea.

At present Mabel knew very little about her

letters, she could find 'M' for Mary or Mabel, but persisted in calling 'N' "cock," and 'G' "fezzer in his cap," some peculiarity about the small 'g' giving rise to the idea; however, she promised to try her best to learn.

"And what child could do more, however poor that 'best' may be," thought her partial sister, lovingly.

But she had very little time to spend with her this morning, for the 'elements' had to be defied. The preparation for that ordeal was watched with mournful interest, by Mabel and her doggie.

At first Flo's sharp bark had been interrogative, expressing a desire to know if the morning were suitable, and when they might start; but the sight of Mary tucking up her dress, and putting on a rain skirt, caused that sagacious animal to utter a long low whine of self pity, for she knew that her coat was too long and too thick, to be allowed to brave the weather unnecessarily.

"Pride mun abide," said Hannah, as she stooped to pat doggie, who was everybody's pet;

“If thou wilt ‘a’ a coat as soft as silk, and as white as milk, thou mun bide in the house when its rainin’.”

“I am afraid the pride is ours, nurse,” said Mary, laughing. “Flo would be quite content to go with a draggled coat, if she were only permitted to follow me, but doggies and little children do not know what is good for them, so must be guided by people who are older and wiser. Now, kiss me quickly, Mabel, or I shall lose my character for Punctuality.”

“Dear heart! send for me when ye want a character,” said Hannah, as she conducted Mary to the door, opened her umbrella, and settled her cloak, and attended to her “as if I were the greatest lady in the land,” Mary said, but Hannah indignantly denied the imputation: “I give thee no more than thy due, and wouldn’t let thee go out in the rain at all, if I had *my* way.”

Mabel stood on a chair by the window with Flo by her side; the latter, to relieve her feelings, was alternately scratching at the window, and barking,

and licking Mabel's face. Both watched Mary anxiously until she was out of sight.

"What weather can harm me when so much love surrounds me?" thought Mary, as she picked her way over the mud, pools of water, and long wet grass. Arriving at "The Larches," her heart was gladdened by further proofs of love and sympathy. The children surrounded her, and hoped, 'dear darling Miss Mary,' wasn't quite drowned. Croft, the worthy old butler, as he took her umbrella, cloak, and overshoes, respectfully suggested that "The weather was more like 'The Flood,' than any downpour he had had the pleasure of witnessing." Even Lady Vicars came to the schoolroom to make sure that her favourite had received no injury.

"We have not had rain for so long," said she, "that I almost forget what it is like, and such rain! I thought, surely it would damp your 'punctuality,' but I am very glad to find that you do not allow even the elements to interfere with that."

"The walk is nothing, thank you," said Mary, with a bright smile. "I am perfectly dry now, I expect the children, who miss their walk, will feel the wet day more than I do," and Mary thought of Mabel and her doggie as she last saw them, with their little noses flattened against the window panes. But as lessons require undivided attention, she resolutely dismissed from her mind everything but the children before her, and they gave her plenty to do; for though Mary would not permit her mind to wander, they were not so particular.

"Did you ever see a man hanged?" queried Julia, her eldest pupil.

"My dear child!" horrorstricken, "whatever put such an idea into your head?"

"My lessons, Miss Mary," replied the dear child, demurely.

"How so?"

"I was reading about the Suspension Bridge over the Menai Straits, constructed by Mr. Telford, I find 'suspend' means 'to hang,' that set me thinking about murder, and then I wondered

if you ever saw a man hanged, did you, Miss Mary ?”

“ Certainly not, but I wish you would try to keep your mind to one thing, you will never get on if you don’t, and you have such capital abilities if you would only apply steadily ; you would like to do me credit ?”

“ Of course, I would.”

“ And do yourself credit ?”

“ Perhaps, I don’t quite know, but I don’t want to vex you, so I will try,” said the child, impulsively throwing her arms round Mary’s neck and kissing her vigorously, then noticing how grave she looked, she sat down and for a time really settled to her studies.

Julia was a clever girl of ten, nervous and excitable ; but very loving and tender-hearted, a troublesome pupil, yet Mary loved her dearly.

Annette, the second, was a pretty child of eight, with long fair hair and nut brown eyes, a dear good little thing, who never did anything she ought not to do, still, I think Mary’s heart went out to her troublesome pupil, who was so often under a cloud, yet so anxious to do right.

Mary's third pupil was little more than a baby, the sweetest little pet, with a face like a daisy, so pure and earnest looking, dear little Edith! She was one of those children, people are apt to speak of, as "too good to live." Everything she said was so sweet and wise, pathetically so, when you thought it foreboded a short sojourn in this world. This beautiful world, if all were like this baby girl!—yet so full of sin and sorrow and pain.

But it was only occasionally that Mary had gloomy thoughts about her darling. She loved her dearly and enjoyed her amazingly, next to her own Mabel, she was her dearest treasure.

"Your 'ittle tumfort is'n me, Miss Mary?" the little thing would say, twining her arms round Mary's neck, and as "her little comfort" Mary always thought of her.

. . . . .  
Lessons and lunch are over, and still the rain falls, it is useless to think of a walk, so all go into the morning room. Lady Vicars and her friend Miss Murray, a tall handsome supercilious looking

girl of twenty, have needlework. Mary, surrounded by her three girls, who are eager listeners, is telling in low tones the story of "Little Nell;" so tenderly and impressively she tells this touching story, that Lady Vicars stops, in the middle of a consultation (about shades of wool), to listen to it.

"You are very fond of children, Miss Annesly," said Lady Vicars, much struck by Mary's manner of speaking, and the absorbing interest her children seemed to take in all she told them. "It is rather remarkable in so young a lady; do you never get tired, and wish to be rid of them for a little?"

"Never," replied Mary softly, "they are always a pleasure to me."

"Just fancy, Emma," said Lady Vicars, turning to Miss Murray, "Miss Annesly is a year younger than you, yet she has had to fill a mother's part to a little sister, for the last three years; care for her, provide for her, and all."

"What a drag you must find the child! Can't you get any one to adopt her? The cost of clothing her, even, would be well spent on your own



dress," said Miss Murray, glancing disparagingly at Mary's washed out muslin. "I pity you! why you might afford new dresses, or, at all events, good dresses, if you hadn't that child to maintain."

Poor Mary flushed crimson, and her hands trembled so that she had to lock them, and lay them on her lap. Raising her pretty earnest face she said indignantly—

"Pray don't waste your pity on me, Miss Murray, my little sister is the delight of my life. I would rather wear old dresses, or poor dresses, all my days, than miss one pretty look from her dear eyes, or one loving kiss from her sweet lips. How can she understand?" thought Mary, as Miss Murray, with a shrug of her haughty shoulders, and a cold stare, resumed her work. "She, who has always had everything her heart could wish for—how can she understand the comfort and joy I take in my one ewe lamb? Let her pity me, if she likes, but it is 'pity misplaced.'"

"Really, Marion, I am surprised at the way you treat that girl," said Miss Murray, after Mary had

gone home. "She quite forgets herself, the idea of a dowdy, ill-bred governess, speaking to me as she did!" and Miss Murray looked as if the feathers of her self-conceit had been rubbed the wrong way, and she had difficulty in arranging her ruffled plumage.

"Not ill-bred, Emma," replied Lady Vicars, gently. "She is a lady by birth and education, and I treat her as such; I cannot imagine her looking dowdy, and knowing why her dresses are not so fashionable as they might be, I think all the better of her, for considering her little sister before herself. You may not think it, Emma, but she really is a girl to be admired—and, for many things, envied—at all events," unconsciously giving utterance to Mary's thoughts, "your pity is misplaced."

Miss Murray had no desire to quarrel with Lady Vicars, so, though she considered her rather weak to be imposed on by "that girl," she wisely changed the subject.

. . . . .  
The rain continued to fall, though not heavily ;

the little rifts in the dark grey, permitted the blue sky to appear, giving promise of a fine evening.

Mary, her heart untroubled by thoughts of shabby dresses, tripped gaily along the still dripping lanes ; as she approached her home, she got just a peep at two little noses flattened against the window pane, looking as if they had never been removed ; but it was only a peep, for the owners of the said noses, recognizing her, vanished from the window, to appear at the door, and welcome her with shrieks of pleasure, and barks of delight.

“ Here I am again, Hannah !” said Mary, as that faithful sentinel removed her wet garments, “ I’ve finished my work, and am ready to stack faggots. Down, Flo ! I know you are glad to see me, but don’t *quite* devour me ! The idea of any one thinking *you* an encumbrance !” she cried, catching up her darling Mabel, and returning the fond kisses with interest : “ She pities me, does she ? She may, if she likes, but it is Pity Misplaced !”

## CHAPTER III.

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PETTED NOT PAMPERED—PERPLEXITIES AND PAIN.

“HERE comes Dr. Grey, we may turn back. I wonder why the old boy is travelling on Shanks’ pony to-day? Something rather unusual,” said Sir John Vicars to his wife, as they were strolling down the avenue leading from ‘The Larches.’

“Dr. Grey, you are the very person I was wishing to see, we are now on our way to call upon you,” said Lady Vicars, extending her hand.

“Then we are both in one mind,” replied the doctor, “for I am on my way to call upon you. My pony has cast a shoe, and is under the blacksmith’s hands; so as I have not seen you for more than a week, I thought I would give you a call; but I hope you don’t want to consult me professionally?”

“Not professionally, yet I do want to consult

you ; I have had a letter from my mother, and she wishes John and me to go to her for a week. Of course I must ask Miss Annesly to stay altogether while I am away ; now what I require your advice about, is the little Mabel. Shall I ask her to stay with her sister ? John thinks I should, but I feel undecided ; what do you say ?”

“ No ; decidedly. The little woman would be lost in your big house, and she is so shy, that she would not be happy, with such a lot of children.”

“ Only five, Doctor, and she would be with her sister,” said Sir John ; “ they appear to me so wrapped up in one another, it is a pity to part them.”

“ Ye - s — that’s — true,” said Dr. Grey doubtfully. “ Still, you see, she is so used to spending her days with only her wee doggie, and when she has her sister, so used to her undivided attention, that I am afraid it would upset my pet, to see Mary attending to other children, as of course she must do. She is of a very jealous nature, and being delicate, has been considered a good deal.”

“I am afraid she is ‘pampered,’” said Lady Vicars, feeling rather disposed to be annoyed, that the proposed invitation should not be heartily accepted, though at the outset she had not made up her mind to invite her at all. “It is a great mistake to pamper children, I think.”

“Nay, nay, don’t call little Mabel pampered; she may be petted, who could help it, but not pampered,” said the good Doctor, growing warm in defence of his absent pet. “She will miss her sister at night, certainly, still I think she will be content with Hannah, and I am sure the strangeness of the house, and the number of children and servants, would quite overwhelm the shy nervous child, —upset her liver, very likely. No, she is better quiet at home—decidedly better!” Perhaps there might be a *soupçon* of selfishness in this arrangement, for the good Doctor had no wish to lose one bit of his darling’s love, and perhaps he thought if she made new friends, he might do so. But he need not have been afraid, Mabel was too loyal to allow her king to be dethroned easily.

"Will you call and arrange with Miss Annesly, Doctor?" said Lady Vicars, looking rather ruffled ; "I leave in good time, to-morrow, so she must come prepared to stop : I think you are making a mistake about the little child, but if you should change your mind, remember you have an invitation."

"Thank you, you are very good. I will arrange everything, but I think, with your permission, I will not mention the invitation, Mary might be tempted to accept it."

"What an unaccountable old boy he grows, I wish we hadn't asked him, Marion, the change would have been good for the poor little thing. Confound his stupidity say I," and Sir John, striking a fusee, lit a cigar and smoked viciously.

. . . . .

"You are quite sure you can manage without me, nurse ? Doctor, you promise me to look in upon them every day ? Oh, I hope I am doing right ! I feel so strangely perplexed," and Mary's face had a worried expression very unlike its usual placidity or brightness.

"Of course Hannah can do without you, and of course I will look in upon them every day," said Dr. Grey cheerfully. "I am afraid you have rather enlarged ideas of your own importance ;" then seeing Mary looked really unhappy, he laid aside his jocularities, and said kindly, "Don't make yourself uneasy about the child, Mary, she will be quite content with Hannah, and I will take her out every day, you can trust me, can you not?"

"I must, I do, don't think me ungrateful, but I never left my child for a night since she was born," said Mary tearfully.

"Tut, tut, girl," said Dr. Grey impatiently, for the sight of her tears made him feel so uncomfortable, that for a moment he was almost tempted to say, "Take her with you." But he was an obstinate old gentleman, and having once made up his mind that his pet was better at home, he wouldn't unmake it again.

Of course Mary knew nothing of this under-current, and felt ashamed of herself, for causing such a kind friend any annoyance, so she promised



to get all ready and not upset Mabel by fretting.

"I wish Lady Vicars had kept her invitation to herself," thought Dr. Grey discontentedly. "I should not be in this perplexity ; but I'm sure I'm right, they'll get over the pain of parting in an hour or two."

Poor Mary slept very little that night, but morning found her outwardly bright and cheerful, and little Mabel taking the tone of mind her sister intended, was busy and important, helping to pack, &c.

"You must take care of Hannah and Flo for me," said Mary, "and water the plants, and talk to Dr. Grey ; dear, dear, what a busy little woman you will be !" and Mary, strangling a sigh, caught up her little sister, and almost devoured her with kisses.

"You won't be welly long away, will you, Sister Mary ?" said little Mabel, dubiously.

"Oh, no time at all," said Mary, lightly, "I shall be back before you miss me, I hope ; mind you do lots of knitting, and don't sit on the grass, nor

stay out too late ; you'll see to that, won't you, Nurse ?"

"That I will, my lamb ; dear heart, keep thy mind quite easy. We'll be like Darby and Joan, th' little lass and I, never fear." But Hannah's puckered up face showed symptoms of tears, which were prevented falling by Mabel beginning to sing, in her pretty baby treble :

"Darby an' Zoan dessed in black

"Silver buccons a hind dere back,

"Bue shoes and lellow laces

"Up an down de market paces."

At the same time strutting up and down the room, with her hands behind her back.

"The darling !" cried Mary. "Fancy her thinking of that just now ; learn something else against sister comes home."

"She might have done it on purpose to cheer me up," thought Mary, as she hurried along the lane ; "What a lovely little pet she does grow."

The sunshine, occasioned by this little event, had not died out of Mary's face before she reached "The

Larches," and Lady Vicars felt rather surprised to see her look so cheerful, and opined that Dr. Grey was right after all. Following her into the school-room, and glancing reproachfully at her eldest daughter, who was standing by the table in the centre of the room, looking disturbed and stubborn, she said :

"Before you commence lessons, Miss Annesly, I wish to mention that Julia is not to be allowed to ride Frisk, while I am away."

The child raised her large dark eyes appealingly, first to her mother, and then to Mary, and seemed inclined to speak ; but shut her lips tight, and gave her shoulders an angry twitch, at the sight of her mother's uplifted finger.

"I am sure you will be shocked," continued Lady Vicars, "to hear that on Saturday afternoon, Julia being trusted to ride up and down the avenue without an attendant, (as all the men were busy), was found giving rides, in turns, to a number of ragged village children ; of course it was very wrong, all kinds of infection may be brought in to us, if that

kind of thing is permitted ; yet she is obstinate and wilful, and won't admit that there was any harm in it, won't see that she has done wrong. I hope you will—I won't say punish—exactly, but let her understand that she is not to be received into favour until she feels differently about the matter. We are not leaving for an hour, so I will come in again to say 'goodbye,'" and with a kind smile to all, save and except the culprit, (who stood nervous and wretched-looking, her small pale face quivering, as she struggled to keep back the tears that pride made her unwilling to shed), Lady Vicars withdrew.

"Dirty little things ! I don't like the idea of them riding my pony !" said pretty Annette, mournfully.

"How was it ? Tell me all about it, Julia," said Mary, gently, as the child still retained a stubborn silence.

"There was a tiny baby, and it said 'O-o-o-o,' pointing its little finger, and looking so longingly at the pony, that I couldn't help jumping down and giving it a ride, then the *big* sister, who was only

a little one like Edie, she looked so pitiful I had to give her a ride, and they did so like it," said Julia, brightening up, "I don't think I was wrong, and I don't say I won't do so again, either."

Mary was only young, and the danger of infection, did not seem so great, as it would have done if she had been older, or more experienced, perhaps ; she thought it showed such a kindly and unselfish spirit in the child, to sacrifice her ride, (for she very seldom got one), to make two poor little children happy, that instead of blaming, as she knew she was expected to do, she felt inclined to praise, so had to cast about in her mind for words to express herself ; placing her arm round the child, who was trembling with excitement, she said kindly :

"I feel sure you didn't mean to do wrong, dear, and I think it was very kind of you to give up your ride, but you must promise not to do so again ; because, now that you are forbidden to do it, it would be disobedience ; and you can understand that disobedience is wrong, can you not ?"

"Of course I can ; well, I suppose I must pro-

mise, if you wish it particularly ; and I don't mind so much promising *you*—because you understand all about it—and oh ! it was such a pretty little baby and not *very* dirty, at least after I had wiped its eyes and nose with my pocket-handkerchief,” (“bless the child !” thought Mary)—“for it had been crying, poor dear, and it did enjoy its ride ; wait till I am a woman, and can do as I like, I will fix a day in every week or month, to be spent in giving pony rides to poor little children, that I will !”

“As you will have to wait eleven years before you are of age, perhaps you may change your mind,” said Miss Mary, smiling kindly on her impulsive little friend and pupil, “but please God you will always remember to be kind and generous to those who are poorer and weaker than yourself.” “What a splendid woman she will make,” thought Mary, “if she retains her tender unselfish disposition, and God gives her wisdom to guide her impulses.”

“Why don't you, don't you—looked shocked, Miss Mary ?” queried Annette, “Mamma said you would.”

“Don’t I look shocked? Never mind, sister has promised not to do it again, so we will forget all about it,” said Mary, kissing the pretty surprised face.

“Not, till she is a woman—and then—and then,”—sang Julia.

“Hush, or I *shall* look shocked, you must not impose upon good nature, my dear,—settle to your lessons like good children, we musn’t lose any more time. What have you to learn?”

“The ‘Flora of Europe’ continued, the limit of the vine is marked northward by a waving line, must I trace it on the map, Miss Mary?”

“Certainly, dear, Annette will stand by you, and you must explain it to her, the best way to impress a thing on your own mind, is to try to explain it to another, now, begin.”

Opening the Atlas, Julia commenced in rather a dramatic manner to explain, that “the limit of the vine is marked northward by a waving line, which crosses France from the mouth of the Loire, intersects the Rhine about the mouth of the

Moselle,—Be careful, Annie!" cried she in a tone that made her sister jump. "There are *two* mouths, perhaps, you'll get a *bite*."

"You shouldn't startle me so, Julia," said Annette reproachfully, "you know a river cannot bite, if it *has* got a mouth."

"But it's got a 'Bight,' " said Julia triumphantly.

Annette turned her pretty nut-brown eyes enquiringly on her governess, who said reprovingly, "You should not try to make jokes and mystify your sister; Julia means 'B-i-g-h-t,' which is a small bay, you know what a bay is, Annette?"

"A place where the water washes up into the land, there is a bay at Douglas."

"Well a 'bight' is a little bay," said Mary.

"She ought to have remembered that, Miss Mary, she had it in her lesson only last week," said Julia, rather defiantly.

"Perhaps she would have done so, if you had asked her in a different manner, but you are too fond of making jokes over your lesson, and that



prevents you getting on with your work, now, proceed"—

"Passes south of the Hartz Forest, and to the south of Berlin, (where it very nearly got on the Spree), I beg your pardon, Miss Mary," said she, seeing a warning finger held aloft, "and then runs eastward nearly on the parallel of 50° N. till it enters Asia a little north of the Aral Sea."

"Yes, that is quite correct with the exception of your remark about the river Spree"—

"That was a joke of Papa's that came into my mind."

"Oh! that little wandering mind of yours!" said Mary, wistfully. "How shall we curb it? But here comes Mamma"—

Taking the little girl by the hand, Mary said, "I'm happy to tell you, Lady Vicars, that Julia has promised not to disobey you, she will not transgress again."

"That's right," said Lady Vicars, looking

pleased and kissing her child affectionately, "I am glad not to leave you in disgrace."

"Thank you, dear Mamma, and may I ride Frisk now?"

"Was that held out as a bribe to induce you to promise?" said Lady Vicars, glancing at Mary.

"No, indeed, Mamma, Miss Mary never mentioned such a thing, and I don't wish to ride, if you would rather I didn't," and poor Julia's lips trembled, though she tried to speak bravely.

"You are a good girl, and to prove that I believe you to be in earnest, I still say, don't ride Frisk until I come back; are you content?"

"Yes, I think quite content, if you are pleased," said the child timidly—oh! what a world of love was in those tender dark eyes! "Does the mother see it, I wonder?" thought Mary; I think she did, for she kissed her again, (and she was not usually demonstrative), and said, "very pleased; try and be good and you will make your mother very happy."

"And your father, too," said Sir John, taking

her up in his arms and giving her a great hug, as he whispered, "keep up your heart, lassie, you shall have lots of pony rides by and by," and he was quite satisfied with the loving kiss on his lips, and tender pat on his face, that he received in acknowledgment, for there was a wonderful bond of sympathy between father and child.

"Carriage is waiting, Sir John," said the butler, in his usual stately manner.

"All right, Croft, see that everything is in. Now, girls, mind you are good to Miss Annesly, we leave everything in your charge, remember," said he, shaking hands kindly with Mary. "I have kissed the rogues in the nursery, and wakened Master George, he looked so bonnie I couldn't resist kissing him too."

"Oh, John, you shouldn't! now he will fret!"

"Not he, wifie, he is too jolly for that; besides the day is glorious, he is better out, than in bed."

"I don't suppose his nurse will thank you," said Lady Vicars, smiling, "but never mind.

Good bye, Miss Annesly, good bye, my darlings, you can watch us from the window."

And so they did, waving their handkerchiefs till the carriage was hidden from view by the tall chestnut trees, for "It seems quite different when we know they are not coming back for ever so long," said little Annette, with a sigh.

The fine morning was followed by a wet afternoon, and not only rain, but thunder and lightning. Poor Mary trembled at the thought of her darling, her timid little Mabel, without her dear sister to comfort her. And her heart sent up a wordless prayer to God, to comfort and protect her.

But the little ones around her, needed comforting. Little Edie in particular, for she seemed possessed with the idea that papa and mamma were out in the rain; for the carriage had returned after leaving them at the station, and she had seen it come back empty.

"Edie must be good, and not fret," said Mary, "and I will tell you a little story."

Seated in a dark corner of the library, in a large

easy chair, Edie on her knee, Julia perched on one arm of the chair, and Annette on the other. Mary commenced her story in the good old fashioned way, 'Once upon a time.'

"Once upon a time, a little Robin Redbreast sat upon a tree overlooking a smooth lawn, that sloped up to the windows of a handsome house. With his little head on one side, he was eagerly watching something with his bright black eyes—'Perhaps it is a worm and he is hungry,' I thought, but no, he is evidently listening; and as he was a very clever little bird, and could hear and understand a great deal more than I could, perhaps he whispered to me all about it; for it was a daisy bud that interested him so much.

"Dear me, sister," a tiny daisy bud was saying to her elder sister who was in the flower of her youth, "I wish you would give me a little more room, you are so close to me I can hardly hold up my head, and you drank up all the dew last night, I feel quite weak and limp this morning."

"Nay, dear sister, be content, we are both

where God placed us. I only drank the dew that fell upon me, perhaps you are safer and happier where you are, God knows best what is good for us. Dear Mother told me one day, just before that fearful thing whirled over us, and tore her away from us, that there was danger in being too high up in the world."

"That's all very fine for you to say," grumbled Daisy-bud fretfully, "but you can see all sorts of beautiful things, I know you can ; *I* just get a peep sometimes between your petals, and that's all, and its not fair; because that dreadful thing came once, is no reason that it should ever come again! I think you are very greedy and selfish, and"—here she stopped, for she was horrified to hear her sister say, in a terrified whisper,

"Bend low, darling, the destroyer is upon us!" Then came a rush, and a roar, and all was dark. When Daisy-bud recovered, she could see the blue sky, the grand house, the tall trees, and the birds that sang on them, but her dear beautiful sister was gone !

"Oh dear!" moaned the poor little bud, "Sister was right; I wish I hadn't said such unkind things to her. I can see the blue sky, the tall trees, the grand house with its windows that look like gold when the sun shines upon them, but I'd give up all, to have my darling sister back again, I am so lonely."

"Be content," sang the little Robin, "The Past cannot be recalled, The Future is before you; see that you are meek and lowly; speak kindly to all, and—Be Content."

So Daisy-bud tried to do her best, she raised her bowed head, and as the dew refreshed her, and the sun smiled upon her,—she looked up trustfully to the clear blue sky, and said:

"Dear Sister, I hope you are safe and happy somewhere. I will try to be content."

"What a pretty little story! did the robin really whisper it to you?" enquired Annette. "Nurse always says a little bird tells her all sorts of things."

"I think I can guess," said Julia, kissing her

dear, darling Miss Mary. "A little bird whispers to all of us if we will only listen."

"Of course it is only a fable, dear,—but most fables are intended to teach us something. This is the moral of mine :—

Speak gently ;  
Be content ;  
Never repine,  
And you need not  
Repent.

And now the thunder has passed over, and poor Edie has fallen asleep. So I will carry her to the nursery, the darling! and then we will have tea—"

"I think the angels look like you, when they carry little children to heaven," said Julia—as she watched Mary carrying, tenderly and lovingly, the little one to her bed.

The intended week had passed into a fortnight, and though daily expected, Sir John and Lady Vicars had not as yet returned. Everything had gone on, to use Mary's own words, "Beautifully," the children as "Good as Gold,"



though it is just possible, that with less skilful management than Mary's, there might have been an occasional "crumple in the roseleaf." Good Dr. Grey had called regularly (up to the previous day), with cheerful accounts from Rose Cottage; and in addition, Mary had received an original epistle, printed (with a lead pencil), by dear Mabel's prentice hand. It was—

DeAr SistEr

I AM wEll sO iS NuRsE.

It is impossible to describe the delight, this unique specimen of typography, gave to Mary, here was a proof (that she could keep constantly before her eyes), that her darling was all right. The children, especially Julia, were never tired of admiring it; wee Edith had even attempted to copy it, but of course had failed. Indeed Julia did not succeed in doing justice to it, how could she?

. . . . .

Lessons were over for the morning, and Mary and the children sallied forth in search of Dr. Grey.

The day was lovely, and though the sun shone brightly, a gentle breeze fanned the trees, wafting to our little party, the delicious perfume of the limes, as they sauntered up and down under the shade of their spreading branches.

"I do not wonder at people singing about the Linden tree," said Julia, "I do so love our limes—whenever I dream anything pleasant, I always seem to smell the perfume of our lime trees. Is it not strange, Miss Mary?"

"You think about it before you go to sleep, and your dream is a continuation of your waking thoughts; but here is Dr. Grey now, I shall hear about my darling," and poor Mary's face broke into sweeter smiles, if possible, in anticipation of the loving message from her darling, that she expected she was about to receive.

"Good morning, young ladies. Sir John returned yet?" said the doctor, drawing reins, but not attempting to get out.

"Not at present, and we have received no letter for two days; indeed, we were beginning to

feel ourselves neglected, not seeing you yesterday, and we had to read our darling's letter over and over again, to comfort us under the trying circumstances," and Mary laughed her soft little laugh at the loving conceit.

"I told you I couldn't come yesterday, that I was going out of town," replied Dr. Grey, looking, Mary thought, quite annoyed.

"Of course, you did, Doctor, I was only in fun, I could not be uneasy, with my darling's letter next my heart, telling me she was well. Is she wanting me very much?"

"I don't know that she is wanting you particularly," and Dr. Grey still looked, Mary thought, put out.

"Strange she does not ask how the child is," thought he, "I wish she wouldn't." Gathering up the reins as if for a move, Dr. Grey raised his hat, saying, "I've got to make up for lost time to-day, so will wish you good morning. I may take your love to Rose Cottage, I suppose, Mary?"—*and not a word of the child.*

Then, and not till then, a suspicion that all was not right crept into Mary's heart, blanching her cheeks, and stiffening her lips. Seizing hold of the reins to prevent him driving away, she said, her voice sounding hoarse and strange in her anxiety, "What is it, Doctor? What are you afraid of telling me? You have never mentioned Mabel, surely she is not ill?"

"Well, she's not exactly the thing," said Dr. Grey, speaking slowly and reflectively, "but hope she'll be all right in a day or two, I was in hopes I should get off, without telling you about her."

"Oh! Doctor, how could you? And I have been so happy with my letter, little thinking how I was deceiving myself. Oh! what shall I do? Mayn't I go to her at once? Nurse would mind the children for an hour or two. You will be good children, if I leave you for a little," said Mary, appealing to the girls. "Good for my sake? for I am so unhappy," and Mary with difficulty restrained her tears.

"Nonsense," said Dr. Grey sternly, "I am

surprised at your thinking of leaving your trust. I couldn't allow it. What would Lady Vicars say?"

"Oh! I don't know what to do! My darling, my pretty baby, ill, and I not with her! For I know she is ill, very ill, you cannot deny it, Doctor, she has never had an ache or a pain that I have not soothed; oh I must go to her, I must, I must!"

"Yes, go, Miss Mary, I'll take care of the children," said Julia decidedly, "Don't cry, please, I cannot bear to see your tears. We will manage quite well till to-morrow, if Mabel wishes you to stay all night. Can't we, Annette? I am sure Mamma would wish it too. Don't be a stupid, Doctor, I won't have my dear Miss Mary distressed, how dare you shake your head and say No! when *I* say Yes?" said Julia, stamping her foot, and preparing to go into a storm of passion.

"Gently, my dear," said Dr. Grey, gravely, "you will not help your governess by being naughty, and getting in a rage."

Poor Julia hung her head, and begged his

pardon, for she felt she was wrong, and said humbly,

“But we can do very well, we really can, then why should you object, Doctor?”

“Hush, dear, say no more about it, I see he is right, I cannot leave you until your mother comes. But oh, my darling, my little love! you are wanting me, I know you are,” and poor Mary, sitting down under the lime trees, sobbed bitterly. In after years, she never experienced either pleasure or pain, in excess, but in imagination she inhaled the perfume of the lime.

“Go into the house, dear,” said Dr. Grey kindly. “If I see any real necessity for your presence I will fetch you, in the meantime trust her to Hannah and to me.”

“And to God,” said Mary solemnly, and straitway she seemed to hear “I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest, for Thou Lord makest me to dwell in safety.” “Oh please, God,” she murmured, “send Thine angels to watch over my darling.”

. . . . .

Lunch was a failure, no one had any appetite ; for the children seemed to feel Mary's trouble almost as much as she did. Croft looked on with respectful sympathy, and humbly suggested, that "a glass of wine or a mouthful of soup, would do Miss Mary a power of good," but she shook her head, and said "no thank you," with the ghost of a smile.

"If I only knew what I ought to do ! The perplexity is almost worse than the pain."

How time seems to lag, if we are miserable ! To Mary, it seems that days must have passed, since she heard of her darling's illness.

"Only three o'clock ? how ever shall I get through this day ?" moaned Mary—"wheels ? am I mistaken ? No, thank God ! here they are at last," cried Mary fervently, as Sir John and Lady Vicars drove up in a cab.

"I thought I would take you by surprise," said Sir John, in his hearty voice. "But Hollo, what's the meaning of this ?"

"It's because we are—so glad to see—you

and mamma," sobbed Julia hysterically, "little—Mabel is—ill—and Miss Mary wants to go to her,—and she couldn't leave us, and she has been fretting about it, and we don't like to see her fret, and please may she go home now?" said Julia breathless with the speed she had been talking—

"This is bad news, Miss Annesly," said Lady Vicars, kindly, "don't distress yourself—but get on your things and go at once, the cab has not gone, it can take you—it will save a little time—I am truly sorry, I was intending to propose taking you and your little sister with us to the seaside, we go to-morrow for a month—but you can have the holiday to nurse her well."

Poor Mary tried to speak her thanks, but was unable—"Oh, how good God is!" she thought, as the trees and hedges flew past her, as she speeded to her darling. "I could not have lived without seeing my pet. Muddy's love, Muddy's little dear! Muddy will nurse her, and never, never leave her till she is quite well," said Mary,



tremblingly, as she took her little sister from Hannah's faithful arms.

“Eh! dear heart, but I'm fain to see you! Miss Mary,” said poor Hannah, wiping her eyes with the corner of her apron. “It's bin ‘Muddy! Muddy! Muddy!’ for the last hour, an I've not heerd her say that for 'ears afore to-day. Bless her little 'art she's reel bad, that she is; and as well, as well, yesterday morning, the darling! Dear, dear, but I've bin at my wits' end this day! Ye may well say as this world's full of Perplexity and Pain.”

## CHAPTER IV.

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PAST PAIN GIVES ZEST TO PRESENT PLEASURES.

“MUDDY’S darling! Muddy’s very own!” The words were nothing; but oh! the love and tenderness expressed in the tone. The mingling of pain and longing, pity and prayer, made Mary’s voice most touching in its sweetness. The child seemed to feel its soothing influence; raising her little hot hand, she tried to stroke her sister’s face, tried to raise her head to meet the loving kiss, but pain and weakness made both attempts futile.

“What is it, Nurse?” asked Mary, in a broken whisper.

Hannah shook her head, and seemed unwilling to reply; but something in Mary’s appealing look compelled her.

“Eh! dear heart! but I misdoubt me ’tis th’

fever ; I don't think I can be mista'en, I lost three as bonnie babbies in it as thou'd see in a day's walk, and they all looked like her when they was first took." And Hannah's distressed face, showed how clearly little Mabel's sufferings, brought her past trouble to her mind. "Th' Doctor is finely upset, he is," continued she in a low tone for fear of disturbing Mabel, who, comforted by feeling herself in the loving arms of her dear sister, had fallen into a troubled sleep ; but the clenched hand and rolling eyes, showed plainly how uneasy that slumber was. "He'll be graidely glad to see thee here, though he didn't like fetching thee ; for fear it cost thee thy place, for thou canna go back, thou knows, now thou'rt once here."

All this time Mary had never spoken, from the moment Hannah mentioned "Fever," she seemed as one stricken with a deadly fear ; yet from her heart went up the petition, "Spare her, dear Lord ! Surely He will," thought she, "for His dear Son's sake, who was 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' Oh, Lord help me, for I

am in sore trouble." After a few moments, these words, learnt in childhood, returned to her mind and comforted her,

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

Mary made no great profession of religion ; but her simple trust, and perfect faith, in God's unceasing care, and unfailing mercy, comforted and sustained her, through all her trials. The hard, strained expression left her face, and looking up with a sweet patient smile, she said,

"Cheer up, Nursie, she'll be better soon, please God," then suddenly remembering nurse's occupation and profession, she continued, "Oh, Nurse the clothes !" referring to her clear-starching.

"Gone home yesterday, all of it, and I mustn't take any more till th' danger's over, aw wouldn't for worlds, anybody took anything from us !"

Poor dear Hannah ! in your simple unworldliness, many might imitate you with profit to themselves, and the community at large ; even

though your language may not be perfectly correct, judged by stringent grammatical rules.

"Yes, we must endeavour to prevent infection. Have we any carbolic in the house?" asked Mary.

"Not a drop, but doctor 'll be here directly, and 'll bring all sorts with him, I canna just bethink me of names—and here he is," said she, with a jump. "How you do startle me, surely!"

"So you have got your own way, my dear," said Dr. Grey kindly, never even noticing poor Hannah's fright. "I was afraid I should have to fetch you."

"Oh, Doctor! how ill she looks, is she in danger?" enquired Mary tremblingly.

"No, not yet, but she will need great care; I am afraid these curls must come off," said he, regretfully, as Mabel moaned piteously when he touched her head. "Have you a sharp pair of scissors, Nurse?"

"I've the pair you gave me last Chrisamus, never been used, dears heart, to think of 'em bein' hansel'd a this en's!" sighed nurse, as she produced

her treasure, wrapped in several folds of silver paper.

Mary could not repress a little gasping cry, as the sharp scissors severed the bonnie chestnut curls; it almost seemed a sacrilege; and the pretty locks clung round the bright steel, as if begging for mercy, but Dr. Grey's remorseless hand never stayed, until the dear head was bereft of every curl, though his heart ached at the sight, and he gazed regretfully at the bright locks, as they hung in shining clusters on Mary's dress, or curled round his feet, like the tendrils of some fair climbing plant.

"What needs be, must be," he said with a sigh, as he gathered up the tresses and put them in a leathern bag, smelling strongly of carbolic acid. "I will have them fumigated, and then they may be kept with safety. Now bring me whiskey, and some cloths, Nurse, keep them constantly soaked," said he to Mary, as he dipped each cloth in a saucer filled with whiskey and water, and laid them gently and lovingly

on the little hot head. "Now for the medicine, it is not unpleasant, it won't distress her," he said, as Mary looked pitifully at the spoon. "There, that is soon gone!" as the parched lips sucked in the moisture eagerly, "one spoonful every hour remember; and Nurse, take away these carpets, and remove the curtains, take every article of clothing out of the room, leave nothing but what is absolutely necessary—that's right; now change these cushioned chairs for cane bottomed ones,—and here," putting his hand on the ottoman, "we will remove this into another room."

Poor nurse obeyed with a very bad grace. "Making the darling's room like a sick ward in a work'us," she said indignantly, when Dr. Grey (perceiving that the bell-pull was Berlin wool work), mounted on a chair, and removed it himself.

"Now bring me a sheet, Nurse; an old one, it must be soaked in carbolic and water, and nailed over the door. One advantage in a low

room, we don't require a step ladder," said he, standing on a chair, and tacking up the sheet in a quiet workmanlike manner. "This must be sprinkled afresh, whenever it dries, and now, I think every precaution has been taken," said he, gazing gravely round the room, and examining it critically, as if he were preparing for a long siege.

Mary thought so, and her heart sank, for she felt how ill he must consider the child, to make all this necessary. Perhaps he saw how much he had frightened her, for putting on a cheerful face, he said :

"I think you may lay her in the bed, she will be content now that she knows you are here ; what a providential thing Sir John and his lady returned to-day, for she was pining for you sadly ; indeed, had I not found you here, I should have fetched you, regardless of consequences. But, I am much better pleased not to have to do so. I take it as a good omen," added he, cheerily.

"I hope it may be, thank you, Doctor, for all



your care of her. Please God, she may be able to thank you herself soon," said poor Mary tearfully.

"Nay, don't thank me," said he hastily, "for I am blaming myself for her illness, though how she has caught it I cannot imagine. I have not one case of scarlet fever, and have not heard of one. I never felt so puzzled; for it is scarlet fever, and she has got it badly, the darling. I wish I could bear her pain!" said he, huskily, as the child moaned. "But you had better lay her in bed."

"I don't like parting with her, even to go to bed," said Mary, as she obeyed, and gently laid her down. Keeping her arms around her, she knelt by the bedside, anxiously watching the little fever-flushed face, and feeling the pain of every heavily drawn breath. "Oh, my darling, my darling!" she moaned, "God send you ease."

Few who have not suffered as Mary did, can realize what she went through that night, and many succeeding days and nights. Her heart was so bound up in her sister, that to see her suffer was misery unspeakable; and the thought of

losing her was worse than death. . . .

"My darling, my little, little child; if I could only bear your pain, how gladly would I do so!" said Mary almost distracted by Mabel's pitiful plaint of—

"My head! my head! oh Muddy, do make it better!" But she did not always know her sister, and that was even harder to bear.

"Muddy! Muddy save me!" she would cry, and when Mary tried to soothe her, she would beat at her, with a strength borrowed from the fever which ran through her veins, and say:—

"Go away, you naughty woman, you 'tole Fo, I wants Fo, I wants my Doggie."

"Perhaps she does miss her dog, don't you think we might let her in, Doctor?" said Mary; but he would not hear of it.

"She wouldn't know her probably, and Flo's thick woolly coat, would carry infection wherever she went."

Sometimes she fancied she was shut up in a box, and begged and implored them to take her out.

“Don’t bury me! don’t put me in the cold ground! I wants to get up, I wants to pay wiv Fo, I wants *my* sister! I *do* so want my sister.”

But when that sister, almost heartbroken at the thoughts her ramblings suggested, tried to gather her in her arms,—her terror only increased.

“Its Betty’s gran’child she’s thinking on,” said Hannah, surreptitiously applying the corner of her apron to her eyes, for the brave old woman wouldn’t give way for worlds, while she could comfort her dear lamb by keeping up. “Don’t take on about it, don’t thee!” as Mary worn out with watching and anxiety, was weeping bitterly. “I was vexed enough they let her see the poor wee thing in its coffin, though it did look like a little angel; for she’s a cur’o’s child, is Miss Mabel, and though her seems babyish in her talk like, she thinks a deal, she does, indeed.”

“But it sounded like a prophecy, Nurse!” perhaps she saw the angel of death hovering over her. “Oh, God spare her, for I cannot

live without her!" cried Mary in an agony. "Oh, Doctor, can't you give her something else?" for Doctor Grey was the only one she would take anything from, and he gave up every spare moment to be with her. Towards evening the battling ceased, and for a few moments, even Dr. Grey thought she was gone, but finding a slight cloud on the hand-glass he held over her mouth, he prised her teeth open with a silver knife, and administered weak brandy and water, through a quill. Oh, how anxiously Mary watched! for an hour she lay perfectly still, (and during that time, with great trouble, Dr. Grey succeeding in giving her three or four tea-spoonsful) then with a little sigh, she turned on her side, and her faint breathing, told her eager watchers that she slept.

"Ah-h-h," said good Dr. Grey, as he turned to the window, apparently to examine the state of the weather, but in reality to hide the traces of emotion, which relief from his anxiety, had brought to his kindly old face. "She'll do now, I'll go."

"Sister Mary, I wants my tea," said Mabel in a weak little voice. "Did you come back last night? don't go a'den, I'fraid when you's away, don't leave me any more!"

"Never again, darling," said Mary, wiping away some joyful tears. "Here is your tea all ready, and you shall drink it in bed, and sister will sit by you, isn't it funny?"

"Yes," said Mabel smiling faintly, "But I'se tired, don't get up yet, lie by me."

"Drink this tea, and eat this toast, and then I will," but Mabel, though she drank the tea, could not be persuaded to touch the toast.

"I not hungry, I wants to do to seep;" and nestling in her sister's arms, she was soon slumbering sweetly. Mary watched her with her heart filled with joy and thankfulness, but soon her own weary eyes closed, and when Hannah came in refreshed with her own night's sleep—for Mary always argued that she was old, and must go to bed—she was delighted to find them both "in the arms of Mrs. Murphy" for so she *miscalled* the god of sleep.

"Dear heart, but I was never so glad in my life!" said she to Dr. Grey, when he called in the morning about nine o'clock. "They look lovely! just like two wax-work cherubs."

"That's right, Nurse, let them sleep, can you give me a cup of tea? I was called out very early this morning, and wouldn't wait for any, I was too anxious."

"Give thee a cup o' tea? in coorse I can, Doctor, and proud to do it. Shall I bring it in th' parlour? I was just getting a cup in th' kitchen."

"Then I'll come too, Hannah, your kitchen is more attractive than many a parlour! I am more glad than I can say, that things have taken a turn for the better, for I was beginning to lose heart. You see the fever *did* run twenty-one days; she'll need a power of nursing, before she gets her strength back. Poor Mary, what a 'coble o' care' her life has been! I wonder if her father is living, what sort of a fellow was he?"

"Oh a graidely fellow enough! a fine clever looking gentleman! I didn't matter him much

mysen, but my dear lamb, was fair set on him, she was; thought him th' best husband in th' world. But ye see I wasna hoodwinked, I could see what she couldna', for with one glint o' his bonny dark eye, he could turn her any way he liked; and what with his dinner parties, an' garding parties, an' sham-pain lunches, money soon melted."

"So he gave champagne lunches did he?" said Dr. Grey, smiling at Nurse's pronunciation of the word."

"Aye, that he did! leastways, that's what *he* call'd 'em, *Sham-pain*, indeed! real-pain would a bin a better name for 'em I'm thinkin', for what he spent on one of his 'little affairs' as he called 'em, would a set up me, and the dear childer, for many a month, that it would!" said Nurse, turning her cup upside down in her saucer, and pushing it away from her, to show, I suppose, that she had finished her breakfast—and was disgusted with her subject.

"But how came he to leave his family in poverty?" enquired Dr. Grey.

“ Well, I never clearly understood, but my dear lamb allays said as it was no fault of his. He thought as she had plenty to live on in a quiet way like, but th’ lawyers picked a hole in th’ deeds or summat, and took every penny! she’d lived on th’ sale of her julery for months afore she died.”

“ And where is he ?”

“ Eh, th’ Lord only knows !” cried Hannah, raising her hands impressively. “ I canna understand it, but if he’s livin’ he’s either a miserable man this very minnet, or a right down wicked un ;—but I hear some one movin’ o’er head,” and old Hannah was off at a speed that did credit to her three score years and ten.

“ Dear heart, but that sleep was worth a kingdom o’ Cow’s eggs, that it was !” said she, joyfully, as she saw dear Mabel’s face, looking thin and pale certainly ; but oh, how sweet and restful !

“ And what may that be, pray ?” said Dr. Grey, who had followed her, “ something very precious, eh ?”

“ That’s more ’n I can tell” laughed Nurse. “ My Granny used to say that, as far back as I can



remember, but I never bethought me to enquire partic'lar, about it; but ye'll be wantin' your breck-fusses, my lambs. Eh, bless ye both, but I'am proud to see ye lookin' so nice!" said Hannah, kissing them tearfully. .

"Dear old Nurse!" said Mabel, putting up her little hand to stroke the yellow wrinkled face, so white and small, it looked like a snow flake resting upon it. "Dear old Nursie, we Darby and Zoan, is'n we?"

"God love it! think of it remembering that now!" chuckled Nurse; "bless it, it was as good as gold, that it was."

"But sister Mary is never doing to leave me aden, tos it makes me poorly."

Dr. Grey winced as if he had received a blow, as he listened to her little innocent prattle.

"Was I wrong in separating them, I wonder? I did it for the best, but I don't feel sure I was right—God forgive me, I'm afraid I'm an obstinate old man;" and Dr. Grey stroked the little face, and thought regretfully, how thin it was!

"We shall have her up and about directly," said Mary, cheerily; "I hope the weather will keep fine, and then we will go across the water."

Oh the delights of convalescence! Mary was never tired of attending to, and amusing her darling sister; and who so clever as she? at planning and devising new amusements, when the little invalid tired of the old ones. She told her tales, dressed her dolls, cut out whole villages in paper, and made fleets and fleets of paper boats; and when her little darling tired of all these, she took her in her arms and sang to her, softly and sweetly, till she dropped asleep. Letters came from Lady Vicars and Julia, which were a great source of pleasure, though of course they had to remain unanswered.

September passed quietly away, as if she feared, by calling in the aid of Rude Boreas, to frighten with its boisterous breath, the timid and delicate child, now slowly but surely struggling back to health, and with a whispered caution to her sister October, to bring with her only smiles and kisses, slipped into her niche, to wait until another

revolution of our beautiful world, necessitated her reappearance.

October's sun was shining in at Mabel's window, which was again graced with flowing muslin curtains. Mary was arranging with care, the tiny rings of chestnut hair, that clustered softly on her little darling's head, when a loud knocking was heard at the door, and Dr. Grey's voice was heard in the hall—and presently appeared, (breathless with the speed he had mounted the stairs) the gentleman himself.

"Now then, darlings!" said he, his kindly face beaming with delight. "Pack up snug and warm, I am going to drive you down to the landing stage. The jolly old sun is shining gloriously, and it's as warm as June! Never saw such a first of October before! It has come on purpose for my lassie, I think. That's right, Nurse, you are a woman after my own heart! Beat all the young ones hollow!" said he, as to Mary's surprise old Hannah appeared, ready dressed for an excursion, carrying in her arms shawls, cloaks, and cushions to pack up her pet.

"Thought we'd surprise you, Mary; run away

and get ready, while Nurse dresses Mabel."

"Why, Doctor, you come down upon us like a whirlwind!" said Mary, laughing. "It will not take me two minutes to get ready, and I *must* help to dress my pet."

Oh what a hurried delightful dressing it was! and when the dear kind Doctor carried her down to his carriage, who should be there, in a state of wriggling delight, that threatened to dislocate every bone in her body, but dear old Flo! How she danced, and barked, and wagged her tail! and seemed ready to jump out of her woolly skin, if that were possible, in order to testify to her joy, but finally settled down at Mary's feet, and looked up at her (as she sat with Mabel on her knee) in silent adoration.

Then, to see the old women, and little children, run to their doors to peep at them as they passed, and wave their hands, and their handkerchiefs (when they possessed any) was wonderful! And when one little fellow (who had been a great admirer of Mary's ever since she had picked him out of the

mud, one dirty day, and gave him a penny) took off his cap and shouted "Hooray!" the cry being taken up by two other small boys, with *no* caps, and rather dilapidated pantaloons, Mabel had to bury her face in her loving sister's dress to hide her happy tears.

The drive was charming, and the sail (for they really went across the water) was the most delightful they had ever had. New Brighton was looking its best and brightest, and on their arrival, the band on the pier was playing the merriest tunes. "Just as if they knew we were comin', my lambs!" cried Hannah in delight.

Then Mabel had a donkey ride, Hannah and Mary walking one on each side, Flo running in front barking triumphantly, and the good little Doctor bringing up the rear with a lady's riding whip, purchased that day for a penny, and which he flourished to the delight of Mabel, and the small boy who was supposed to induce the animal to proceed.

Another delightful sail, while the sun was still

shining ! A pleasant drive home, which they reached happy and hungry, quite ready to enjoy the good dinner, prepared, as a surprise, by kind Mrs. Grey and her faithful old servant.

“ Does God like to be thanked, or does he feel shy ?” asked Mabel, as she nestled in her sister’s arms, resting after the fatigues of their happy, happy day.

“ Why, dear ?”

“ Betos I would like to thank Him for making me well, and sending me grapes, and letting you tum back to love me, and letting dear Ducky Grey take me atross the water,” said the child, earnestly.

“ Do, dear,” said Mary, rejoiced to find her darling possessed a grateful heart. “ *I* thank Him every day, and every hour in the day, for all His goodness. Darling, as we enjoy the sunshine more, after a cloudy day, so, pleasure is twice as sweet, when it brings with it the remembrance of Past Pain.

## CHAPTER V.

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### PROCRASTINATION—ITS PAINS AND PENALTIES.

“DEAR heart! but her do look peeky! A breath o’ sea air would put a bit o’ colour in her cheeks; an’ to think, of the hunderds - an’ - hunderds, that father of hers wasted! Dear! dear!—but it’s enough to aggrawate a saint!” soliloquised Nurse, pausing in her occupation (that of spreading fine laces on the grass) to watch Mary, as she walked rather wearily up and down their small, but neat garden, with Mabel in her arms. “The quality ’ll be back in little better ’n a week, and hers no more fit to be left, than Miss Mary is to teach, mewed up as hers bin all these weeks! I’ll speak to th’ Doctor about ’em, that I will, and”—

‘Speak of an angel, and you hear his wings,’ just then our old friend drove up to take ‘his children,’ as he now called them, their daily drive.

"Good morning, Nurse, how's the world using you?" said he good-humouredly.

"Middling just," replied Hannah, in what for her, was rather a dismal tone.

"Ah-h-h- is it so? What's wrong, eh? But never mind, you and I will have a chat when I come back. Can't stop now, I've got a trap, and want to catch a sunbeam," said he, laughingly, as he drove off with his girls.

By the appearance of their faces on their return, Dr. Grey had been successful in capturing his sunbeam, indeed he was such a genial old soul, he generally carried smiles and sunshine with him.

"You have had your full share of my company this morning," said Dr. Grey, as he courteously held open the gate for Mary and Mabel to pass in. "So, I request that you retire to your room, and take a nap for an hour, I am going to cultivate Nurse," said he, roguishly, as he kissed little Mabel, and patted Mary on the back.

"Oh! you tyrant!" said Mary, nevertheless she obeyed.



Finding his way into the kitchen, Dr. Grey seated himself on the ironing-table, and prepared for his promised chat with Nurse.

“What a big sigh! what is troubling my dear old woman?” said he, “I’ve sent the children to lie down for a bit, so we can have our ‘secrets’ (as Mabel calls them) all to ourselves.”

“Well, to tell thee the truth, Doctor, it’s th’ little un as is troublin’ me; it makes me fair sick agen to see her peeky little face, and hers no more weight than a bunch o’ fithers! Her wants change o’ air, that’s what her wants,” and Hannah took a fresh iron, held it against her withered cheek to test its heat, and being satisfied on that point, polished it on a piece of brown paper carefully soaped and sprinkled with brickdust, rubbed it with a duster, and recommenced ironing with great vigour.

“Want change of air, do they? That’s just my opinion,” replied Dr. Grey, smiling. “But then you see, it wouldn’t do to send them anywhere, whilst there was any fear of their carrying infection.”

"Ah, but," interrupted Nurse, "it's none 'fection I'm thinking on, but *means*—where's means to come fro', I wonder? You see seven week, at say a pound—(for I mostly earned from fifteen shillings to one pound five a week) would have took them, an' more'n took 'em, and that's where it is."

"Never mind, Nurse, don't vex your dear old heart! I had no idea that you were troubling yourself, or I might have told you sooner, that I always intended to send them away for a bit, as soon as it was safe. I'm not a rich man, but I make enough to keep myself and the old lady, the house is my own, and I have a tidy sum put by for a rainy day, so I can afford to please myself, and find 'means,' as you call it, and if you feel any delicacy about receiving it as a gift, why, Miss Mary may pay me back when she is a rich woman," and Dr. Grey laughed to think how neatly he had managed it. "I'm off to Southport this afternoon to find lodgings, but remember," said he, holding up a finger, "It's a secret, between you and me."

"The Lord forgive me for repining!" said

Hannah, "and bless thy dear kind heart, Dr. Grey ! Eh, but my lambs will be in a takin !" and Hannah, in the lightness of her heart, began singing, in a treble that had once been very sweet, though now it was rather quavering, ' He's better far than bonnie,' and ironed with redoubled speed, in order that she might be able "to fettle things a bit," before her darlings left.

Dr. Grèy did not appear again that evening, and Nurse was in a state of concealed delight, and nervous excitement, designated by Mary 'the fidgets.'

"Do sit down, there's a darling, I am not going to lessons for a week, you will have lots of time to iron my poor dresses ; they are on their last legs, I'm afraid, Nurse," continued Mary, with a little sigh, "No one but you could make them look even decent."

"Dear heart, never mind, thee'd look a lady in sack-cloth an' ashes," replied Nurse, consolingly.

"Oh, I don't mind much, but leave them now, there's a dear old Nurse," pleaded Mary, coaxingly.

But Nurse was strangely obstinate this evening, smiling mysteriously she said,

“ Dear heart, there’s no telling what might happen ! I shanna feel right till thy poor things are as nice as *I* can make them.”

So Mary amused Mabel, and let her take her own way, without the slightest suspicion that she had any real reason, for wishing to have her things in readiness.

. . . . .  
“ Dr. Grey, so early, and walking ! What can be the matter ?” said Mary, jumping up from her breakfast to open the door.

“ Nothing wrong I hope, Doctor ?” she enquired anxiously.

“ Oh dear, no ! only Nurse promised to give me a poached egg, if I got here by eight o’clock,” said he, winking knowingly at Nurse, and nodding his head to give her to understand that it was all right. Nurse, taking the hint, vanished ; and reappeared in an incredibly short space of time, carrying a cup and saucer

and a covered plate, which she placed before Dr. Grey.

"Ah-h-h-" said he, "I call that a perfect picture! just like a ball of snow! you must come and give our old woman a hint; she can do most things, but she can't poach eggs like you!" Then, pitying Nurse's expectant face, he added, "Can you get these young ladies ready in an hour? I want to take them to Southport for a week."

"In course I can; dear heart, wasn't it just a miracle I got their clothes ironed last night!" and Nurse, laughing to think how cleverly she had kept her secret, bustled out of the room before Mary found voice to say,

"Doc-tor?" It was only a word of two syllables, but, taken in conjunction with Mary's blushing, tearful face, it meant volumes, amazement, delight, gratitude.

"Doc-tor!" mimicked he, "and what may that mean, Miss? Do you object?" Sly old boy! he knew quite well how very pleased she was.

"Object, Doctor! No, indeed. Oh, Mabel

darling, you will get your wish ; you shall sit on the shore, and watch the water, and dig in the sand all day !" said Mary, gathering her darling in her arms, and hugging her with delight.

Mabel seemed to think it almost too good news to be true, yet her eyes sparkled, and her cheeks flushed, at the bare idea of it.

"A bucket and a spade?" she whispered, "and shall we do in a boat?"

"Two buckets if you like, and you are going in a puff train ; and if you will give me a kiss, I will fetch Jack and the carriage, and off we'll go."

The child held out her arms to be taken, for she was too weak to jump as she used to do, and laying her face against Dr. Grey's shoulder, after bestowing the coveted kiss, she said with a sigh expressive of great content :—

"God does like to be thanked ! for He is diving me more treats !"

Dr. Grey looked enquiringly at Mary, but she only smiled and shook her head, too happy to find words to express herself ; and wee doggie, who had

been newly washed, and was looking like a prize ba-a-lamb in her blue neck ribbon, scenting pleasure, as the war-horse scents the coming battle, put her fore paws on Dr. Grey's knee, wagged her tail, elevated her pink nose, and whimpered with delight—!

“Bless my heart! what is all this about?” said Dr. Grey, as Mary, taking his plump white hand, shook it, laid her soft cheek against it, and finally kissed it before she parted with it. “Here, take your darling, and let me go, before I am eaten up, entirely.” Calling out to Nurse that he would be back in half-an-hour, in a voice that sounded decidedly husky, though he couldn't imagine why, he remarked as he hurried down the garden:—

“Dear me, my throat is very queer this morning, I want the cat's paw, I think!” an original device for clearing the voice, which, like many other devices, is more desirable in theory than in practice; “Glad I went yesterday and secured those lodgings! should have been too late in half-

an-hour, I had the pull on procrastination there! I must tell my old lady!" chuckled he.

'My old lady,' as he always called his dear wife, was anxiously watching for him, fearing he was driving it late, for she knew his weakness. To her he triumphantly repeated his remark about procrastination.

"Well," said she, smiling, and looking as if she thought she could not find his equal in the wide world, "It is quite time for you to know if you ever will, that 'procrastination is the thief of time.' Are the dear children ready, and are they pleased?"

"Both, Sweetheart! and now I must love you and leave you, or I shall miss our train." And he kissed her as tenderly as he did when she was a young and blooming bride.—Seeing them, any one would have said "what a nice couple!" they were small, though not looking *little*, the dark and fair hair now both very white, made their smiling faces look wonderfully alike, and well they might!—they had had time to grow alike, for though only



sixty, they had 'lived and loved together' for forty years.

Hannah, her cap a perfect marvel of whiteness and 'Tallying,' stood ready with her darlings when our Doctor drove up; at her feet was the box, the contents of which had caused her so much anxiety, but now she proudly surveyed it and felt happy to know that everything was 'got up' to a nicety. With many kisses she wished them "God speed," throwing an old shoe after them for luck, and watching till the last speck vanished. Then smoothing down her apron, that had been slightly disarranged by the application of its corner to her faithful old eyes, she settled to work with a will, happy in the thoughts that her darlings "were going to get a mouthful of sea breeze at last, bless them!"

Not a step of the journey but was full of wonder and delight to little Mabel, and through her, to her sister and Dr. Grey. Arrived at Southport, a carriage drawn by two modest-looking

grey donkeys conveyed them to their destination.

"This fine weather is good for trade," remarked Dr. Grey, as they drove down Seabank Road, for the houses with their bright windows and fresh white curtains, had all that unspeakable look, that in a town devoted to 'visitors' betokens 'full;' and occasionally might be seen an overtired landlady rushing to her gate to see "if that girl be comin', drat her?" who with her half-dozen dinners on her mind, might also be considered 'full.'

"Here we are!" said Dr. Grey, as the carriage stopped at almost the last house in the row; the door being opened by a tall pleasant-looking servant, they were shewn into a pretty parlour, where they were received by a little lady who had been once upon a time 'very pretty;' the constant smile on her lips and the watchful, wistful look in her soft brown eyes, betokening a great desire to please and inability to hear. Poor thing, she was nearly stone deaf!

"You've had a pleasant journey, I hope?" said

she, softly rubbing her hands together. "Yes," answering her own question; "I'm so glad; would you like to see your room?" "Yes, certainly;" again answering her own question, and mounting some rather steep stairs, followed by Mary, carrying Mabel, she opened the door of the 'darlingest little room.' There was just space for their small box, and it wanted only their hats and jackets hung behind the door to make it quite complete.

"Got everything you require, I hope?" said Miss Garland (for that was their landlady's name). "Towels? yes; water? oh how careless!" peeping into the jug and finding it empty. "Want to wash your hands, I dare say? yes, certainly;" and before Mary could decide how she could make her understand, that they were going down immediately, and required nothing just yet, she had vanished with the jug.

"How shall I make her understand what I mean, Doctor?" said Mary, quite distressed. "I never felt so awkward in my life."

“ Oh, you will soon get used to her, and she is the gentlest, kindest-hearted creature in all Southport, I should say, and a splendid cook. Perfectly honest and trustworthy in every way, so I shall be able to leave you with her in perfect confidence ; of course, I stay with you till dinner is over, and will come again—let me see, to-day’s Tuesday—well—Friday, you may expect me on Friday, and mind you drop a line every day to Hannah, so that I shall know how you are.”

Mary promised, and Mabel, looking wistful, “ wished he hadn’t got to leave them.”

“ Never mind, I know of the loveliest shop !” said he, dropping his voice to make it more impressive. “ Buckets ! and spades ! and dolls ! and puff trains ; will you come and see it ? it is only next door !”

Having explained to Miss Garland, by means of a slate, that they would be in to dinner at one, they went to explore the shop next door. Mabel was delighted with it and all that it contained ; which proved how easily she could be pleased, and

the rather grim-looking old man, who acted as custodian, touched by Mabel's pretty delicate face, and her evident pleasure in all the beautiful things she saw, unbent, and exhibited, and explained everything in a wonderful manner.

The next source of delight was a baby donkey, it was standing in a small railed off portion of the road, just before you get to the promenade. It could only be a few weeks old, and was a pretty little thing with a brown shaggy coat, and the most innocent face in the world. Its mother stood on the opposite side of the road, waiting patiently while a bonnie sunburnt donkey-woman, carefully fastened two pretty baby girls—twins, I should say, from their appearance—in the panniers she carried on her back. Jenny, for that was her name, looked wistfully at her own baby, and gave a mournful bray, but trotted off obediently at the word of command. Indeed, all the donkeys seemed well trained and kindly treated, many of them positive pets.

The little fellows that attended to them,

sturdy barefooted boys, but perfectly clean and bright, and pleasant looking, vied with each other whose animal should be best groomed. Indeed, they used to get quite excited over their relative merits. But Jenny still continued Mabel's pet, and she had a ride on her every day.

The week passed all too quickly ; the Friday, Dr. Grey spent with them, being a red letter day. They had a long drive in a donkey carriage across the sands down to low water, Dr. Grey pretending to be, and poor Flo being really, dreadfully frightened, when the waves splashed up and around the carriage wheels. Mabel was delighted, and clapped her hands and sang in the fulness of her joy. But poor wee doggie shivered and shook until they turned back, when finding herself once more on dry land, she barked vociferously, to prove that she dared defy the waves ! at all events, now she was out of their reach.

After this, they went in a tramway car down to the end of the pier, and walked back, but Mabel did not enjoy this much, she seemed possessed with

the idea that there was danger of their falling through the cracks between the planks.

"I don't like being so up high, I like to run on the sand," said Mabel, "and so does Fo, don't you, Fo?" Of course Flo wagged her tail and barked assent.

"Suppose we go through the town and look at the shops," suggested Dr. Grey, and this meeting with Miss Mabel's approval, they strolled gently through the streets, encountering wonderful things on their way. The first was a man with performing dogs, but they pitied them so much they could hardly bear to watch the really clever things they did. Poor little things, they did look so hungry, and miserable! with jaunty little hats stuck on one side of their heads, as if to call attention to their sad and doleful faces, and smart coats, through which protruded tails, that looked as if they hadn't got a wag left in them!

"What a shame it seems for men to earn their livelihood by torturing little creatures, for they *have* been cruelly used, I feel sure of that," said

Mary, indignantly, as they turned away with angry feelings in their hearts, yet powerless to help the poor dumb creatures, who seemed to follow them with imploring looks.

"Fancy Fo doing like dem poor doggies! you wouldn't like it, would you, Fo? I'd run away if I was one of dem poor doggies," said Mabel, thinking she had made a discovery, and wondered the poor ill-treated dogs didn't think of it. "I'd run away, and so would Fo."

"But they have nowhere to run to, and no strength and spirits to run with, poor little things," said Mary pitifully.

"O Dicky Birds! let us do and see Dicky birds!" said Mabel eagerly—so to please her they crossed the street to where a small crowd was gathered round a man with performing canaries—

"Dicky birds not mis'sable," said Mabel, "they hop and sing." Indeed it was quite a pretty sight. About twenty canaries hopping and chirping, as merry as possible, and they looked so droll in their little hats and cloaks, that a kindly looking man



occasionally put on them, when he wished them to personify various celebrities, that both Mary and Dr. Grey agreed with Mabel that it was "so funny," and laughed heartily.

A visit to the shops ending with the purchase of a wax doll (that opened and shut its eyes), and a cradle for it to sleep in when its eyes were shut, completed the delights of the afternoon, and as they sat at their tea in Miss Garland's pretty parlour, I don't think, if you had searched Southport through, you would have found three happier people!

Miss Garland proved a treasure, she was so attentive that they quite forgot that she couldn't hear; she seemed to know by intuition what to do or say to make them comfortable. So when the time came that they had to leave her, they parted with mutual regret. Miss Garland "hoping," as she softly rubbed her hands together, "that they would come to see her again, for she had got quite fond of Mabel, and Flo she considered the best behaved dog that had ever entered her house."

Poor Hannah's delight at their appearance on their return, was quite refreshing.

"Dear heart, but I knew a mouthful of sea air was all tha' wanted," she said, hugging her darling. "Bless it, why its fifty pounds better, I declare it is! Why thy hair is grown, and thy cheeks are like peaches!"

"And what am I like, Nurse? You don't even look at me," said Mary, pretending to be jealous.

"Tha' knows better'n that, my lamb!" said Hannah, lovingly. "But there was na so much room for improvement in thee, all the same."

"I'm 'better far than bonnie,' am I not, Nurse?" said Mary, kissing her.

"The Lord love thee, and keep sorrow from thee!" said Nurse, impressively, as she returned her loving kiss, and left them to see that tea was ready.

"Her looked that like her mother, it gave me quite a turn," said Hannah that evening to Dr. Grey when they were having what he call "a cosy chat."

“The Lord send her a happier life!”

“Amen,” replied Dr. Grey, heartily, “I will turn in to-morrow to see how Mabel gets on without her sister.”

. . . . .  
“Oh, you dear darling, Miss Mary, I thought I was never, never going to see you again,” cried Julia, almost suffocating Mary with the energy of her hug. I thought I should never get tired of holidays, but I couldn’t enjoy them properly, I have so longed for a sight of your face.”

“You dear loving child!” said Mary, affectionately—“and what does Annette say?” as a pretty little face was demurely presented for a kiss.

“I like holidays, and I like Scarboro’; we saw such lots of pretty ladies and carriages, and had such nice walks by the sea; but it would have been nicer if you had been with us, for you could have told us tales you know.”

Julia looked as if she were going to make some indignant remark, but a kindly pressure from Mary’s hand restrained her as she asked,

"And where is my wee pet? Is she well?" Just then little pattering feet were heard on the nursery stairs, and a sweet little voice answered,

"Dear little dirl tumming to see oo," and a bonnie baby face peeped in at the schoolroom door.

Pretending not to see her, Mary stooped down apparently to pick something off the floor, but in reality to be within reach of the baby arms, that were immediately thrown round her neck.

"Is oo glad to see me? does oo been wanting me?" lisped the pretty rosy lips.

"Oh, you little love!" cried Mary, returning the child's loving embrace, as she rose into an erect position, still keeping the little one in her arms, I am very glad to see you, very glad to be among you again, and very glad to tell you that my own little sister is quite well again."

"Dear little Mabel," said Julia, "we have been so sorry for her, but I told you so in my letters, didn't I, Miss Mary?"

"You did, dear, it was very good of you to write so often when you got no reply; but I was

afraid to answer you. It is very difficult to keep up a correspondence when—as an Irishman once said—the ‘reciprocity is all on one side,’ now get your dictionary and find that word, and then let us settle to lessons, we have lost time to make up, remember !”

“I’m afraid I don’t feel like settling just yet,” said Julia, with a sigh. “Oh, here’s mamma coming to see you, we shall have a few minutes’ reprieve,” continued she, smiling roguishly.

“Glad to see you again, Miss Annesly,” said Lady Vicars, kindly, “you have been in sad trouble, I hear from Dr. Grey ; however, ‘all’s well that ends well,’ your sister is quite strong and well again, I hope?”

“Not quite strong yet, though gaining strength rapidly, I’m happy to say. Poor darling ! I nearly lost her !” and Mary’s face blanched at the thought, but resolutely banishing everything pertaining to self, she continued, “I have been telling the children, we must work hard, to make up for lost time.”

"It will be very up-hill work, I fear; I don't think a book has been opened since you left them; Scarboro' is too fashionable a place to leave me time to devote to the children," said Lady Vicars, regretfully.

"Oh, Mamma, I opened a book, don't you remember? Fairy Tales; and I read *Punch* every week, Papa lent it to me—" said Julia, looking as if she expected a reproof,—but fortunately, Dr. Grey and Sir John were seen passing the window,—and Lady Vicars went to receive them; leaving Mary and the children to settle down, which they did in a very short time; for Mary had a decided talent for teaching, and made any subject so interesting, that they learned without knowing they were studying, and felt only that they were "being amused."

We must now leave the schoolroom, and step across the marble hall to Lady Vicars' morning room, where Dr. Grey is entertaining her and Sir John, with a graphic account of all that had happened to "his children" since last they met.

"You have proved yourself 'The Good Samaritan!'" said Lady Vicars, admiringly. "Whatever would they have done without you, Doctor?"

"The Almighty would have found some one else to do His work, I suppose," replied Dr. Grey. "You are giving me more credit than I deserve, for, candidly speaking, I have grown to look upon them as my own, and often wish I were richer for their sakes."

"Oh, by the bye, dear," said Lady Vicars, turning to her husband, "did you ever find out anything about that Mr. Annesly who dined at your club a month or two ago?"

"Never! I put off making enquiries till it was too late. Old Brown—whose visitor he was—set off to the Continent, and took him with him, for anything I know to the contrary, at all events he vanished, and 'left not a trace behind,' not even a 'grease spot!' that was the last of 'the man made of money,' I believe!"

"Really, John, what nonsense you talk, I wish

you had not 'put off,' as you call it, for I have an idea that he ~~was~~ was a relation, and I am sure they are girls no one need feel ashamed of."

" 'Procrastination,' " said Dr. Grey, slyly, " 'is the thief of time,' so my dear old lady tells me, suppose he had turned out a rich uncle and adopted them, you would have lost your Governess."

"I should be very sorry for that, though it does seem selfish," replied Lady Vicars, "to lose her, I mean; for she is the best teacher I ever had, though she is so young."

"She teaches well, because her heart is in it," said Dr. Grey; "youth has nothing to do with it, nor age either, for that matter. It is astonishing what people can do, if they only give their whole hearts to their work. One of the best teachers of music I ever knew, was a lady whose fingers were so crippled with rheumatism, that she dared hardly strike a note. She used to 'demonstrate' with her feet! To see her give a lesson, particularly if the music was good, and required much execu-



tion, was a sight to be remembered ! the way she hopped, and skipped, and stamped, counting now loud, now low, as the case might be, was most amusing ! She was rather stout too, and wore a false front, which in the excitement got awry—oh, it was rich ! She was very much loved and respected, no one thought of making fun of her openly, but many a good laugh I have had on the quiet, though she was a worthy old soul, and turned out some first-rate musicians, she did indeed ! Now I really must tear myself away,” and with a cordial shake of the hand, the good old Doctor disappeared, popping his bright face in at the door again, to say “I’m just going to take my little one for a drive you know.”

“What a worthy beaming old soul he is,” said Sir John, with a laugh. “Of course, we must leave a margin, for I fancy our good old friend romances a little, still I have no doubt there is some truth in his story.”

“Of the wonderful teacher of music ? oh, *I* believe it all, John, provided her pupils had taste

and talent ; but she could never teach ordinary pupils in that style, I fear."

The weeks and months slipped by ; our friends at Rose Cottage scarcely knew how ; time passes quickly with happy busy people, and our "Happy three,"—as Dr. Grey had taken to calling them—were both.

"Only fancy, Nurse, two weeks to day will be Christmas Day ! how time flies !" remarked Mary, as they sat at work in the cosy kitchen, a thing they often did when Hannah had no ironing or clothes about, it saved coal, and that was a great consideration ; or, as Mary used sometimes to say—for the sake of the joke—"grate." "I shall not have long to wait now, before I can give our dear Doctor his slippers ; will your muffler be finished, Pet ?"

"Oh yes, if Nurse makes a few more 'stakes," replied Mabel, gravely. Mary laughed at this, for she knew Hannah was in the habit of taking up the child's work, knitting vigorously for a few

minutes as if in a fit of abstraction, then appearing suddenly to remember, putting it down, saying, "Dear heart, what a mistake I am making!"

"I am afraid I shall have to scold Nurse," said Mary, looking lovingly at the faithful old woman, who was busy making a new frock and mantle for "Clarissa," the doll bought at Southport.

"Dear heart, tha' doesn't know how to scold!" said Hannah, smiling, "I never heard thee say a wrong word sin' tha' was born."

" 'Oh watch ye well in gladness—  
In gladness may you fear ;  
But keep no watch in sadness,  
For the angels then are near,' "

sang Mary. "I wonder what put that into my mind to-night, I hope we are not *too* happy! everything has seemed to prosper with us lately, and our darling is now so strong, thanks to dear Dr. Grey ; we can never love him enough, what would have become of us without him ?"

"Dear heart, the Lord allays 'tempers th' wind to th' shorn lamb'!—what is it, Doggie?" as Flo

pricked up her ears. "Did'st t'e think I was meanin' thee?" said Hannah, patting the dog's woolly back.

"She hears Dr. Grey!" cried Mary, starting up, as a well known knock came to the door.

"Sit thee still—let me answer th' door," and Mary, knowing Hannah's peculiarity, resumed her seat.

Instead of coming into the kitchen at once, Dr. Grey and Hannah turned into the parlour, and there they remained, until Mary, getting nervous, knocked at the door and begged to be admitted.

"Come in, my lamb," said Hannah, "Doctor's in a bit o' trouble."

"Trouble?" said Mary, softly, "and is it 'trouble' that has kept you away from us all week? I am so sorry! and I was only just thinking how happy we were! Don't sit here in the cold, come into our bright kitchen and let us comfort you—you have comforted us, many and many a time," and Mary slipped her arm coaxingly into his.

"Aye, come thee ways in, dear heart! 'Thy

sorrow is my sorrow,' we can all on us say that, an' a warm fire on a cold night like this, is kind o' cheery," and Hannah led the way into the kitchen, where they found little Mabel fast asleep on the rug by the fire, her pretty head pillowed on Flo's woolly coat. At the sight of Dr. Grey, Flo wagged her tail and looked appealingly, as much as to say, "Excuse me rising, you see the fix I am in."

"Good old Doggie, I quite understand," said Dr. Grey, stooping to pat the faithful beast—and as he gently kissed the pretty sleeping child, he added, "It is not every one can boast such a pillow!"

. . . . .

"Now tell me all about it, please, dear Doctor," said Mary, when she returned from putting her darling to bed, "I know you went to London to see your aunt, who was ill—"

"And found her dying," said Dr. Grey, gravely. "Poor thing, she was speechless when I got there, I shall never forget the anguish that looked out of her eyes, as she took my hand and tried to tell me

something. After her death, I understood it all. She had always been a strange mixture of generosity and greed ; doing a kind thing one day, and repenting it the next, if you happened to offend her. Forty years ago she lent me £1000, to pay off college debts and begin housekeeping. She promised to leave it to me when she died, provided I was careful never to get in debt again. Many and many a time she has shown me my 'I O U,' and reminded me of my promise—but that was long ago, and I have always kept my promise ; never betted, nor touched a card, since I was married : and she—she put off, and put off, making a will, or destroying the paper, and when too late, felt the 'Pain' of her 'Procrastination,' and I must suffer the 'Penalty.' My 'I O U' is now in the possession of her brother, and my uncle. His lawyer has just informed me, that I shall have to refund every penny, with interest. So there goes my £3000 ! and what have I to look to for a 'Rainy Day ?' "

"The Lord keep the 'Rainy Day' away !" said

Mary tearfully. "Oh! what a wicked, wicked old woman your aunt must be!"

"She Procrastinated. If Procrastination is wicked, you may call her wicked. She repented, and would have atoned: we must not speak hardly of the dead. 'Never halloo till you are out of the wood.' It is my besetting sin, I fear. I must not blame her, I may perhaps have to pay the Penalty and feel the Pain caused by my own Procrastination."

With these ominous words Dr. Grey said farewell, and went out into the clear cold night, a sadder, if not a wiser man.

## CHAPTER VI.

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POOR, BUT NOT PAUPERS.

"You objected to my speaking unkindly of your dead aunt, Doctor," said Mary, when a few days afterwards they were talking matters over. "I hope you will allow me to say that I think your old uncle ought to be ashamed of himself!" and Mary, who was cracking nuts for Mabel, gave the crackers an angry squeeze, and threw the shell into the fire, with an energy that boded ill for the 'old uncle,' had he been within arms' reach.

"I don't suppose he considers himself *very old*," said Dr. Grey, smiling to see how ready his dear girl was 'to put on the gloves' in his behalf. "At least 'when he dies of age, I may quake with fear,' for there is only a year between us. Aunt Margaret was the eldest, and he was the youngest, of a large family, and he is the only one left. Ah,



well! 'What is to be, will be.' I expect he is crowing finely at getting the whip hand of me. We were always at loggerheads as lads, but then—I generally beat him. He wanted my dear old lady, too—and I won the day there!" said he, all his trouble forgotten in the remembrance of his former triumphs. "Lord! how wild he was!—he vowed he'd be revenged! and I expect I have to thank him for turning poor Aunt Margaret against me. Never mind, I got the wife; and I have had forty years' happiness, thank God!" said the good old Doctor, reverently, "and he's a rusty, crusty, old bachelor, that wouldn't give a dog a bone—he'd bury it first."

"Then I wouldn't wish you to change places with him, though he may be rich, for 'it is more blessed to give than to receive.' You are happier than he is, twenty times over, for love and gratitude gladden the heart, when riches can not," said Mary, her pretty fair face glowing, and her blue eyes sparkling, with the eagerness with which she spoke.

"Naughty man's money turn to dead leaves, perhaps," said Mabel, nodding her head sagely, thinking of a fairy tale her sister had once told her.

"Or bring forth 'Dead Sea fruit,'" said Dr. Grey, taking the little one in his arms. "No—I don't envy him a bit—and wouldn't change places with him for all the world!" and he meant it too. Still, he was constantly being reminded, that he was not so rich a man as he used to be. The interest of his £3000, he had always been accustomed to consider pocket money, to spend as he liked, either in presents to his wife, or on some little indulgence for her or 'his children,' seldom for himself, for he was the most unselfish of men! Of course, now that was gone, he had to think twice, before he spent once. But there is love in a nutshell; and after the first unpleasantness was over, he found he could give as much pleasure with trifles, as he could with more valuable things.

So Christmas passed happily in spite of "that bad man!"—as little Mabel continued to call Dr.

Grey's uncle,—Mary's slippers were presented and received with much pleasure ; Mabel's muffler was considered a work of art worthy of "fairy fingers," a remark that amused Mary exceedingly, knowing how much "old Hannah's 'stakes" had to do with the completion of it. The dear old lady was delighted with a pretty lace collar, a further proof of Mary's industry, and a book mark with "A Happy New Year," worked by Mabel, in blue silk, because "true blue never spots," the good old Doctor had said. Nor had Hannah been behind hand, and the woollen mittens knitted by her for Dr. and Mrs. Grey, were received by them in a manner very gratifying to her faithful heart.

"To think o' them vallying a trifle like that now! dear heart—and me almost 'shamed to offer them! well, well, but I *am* glad, graidely glad, sure-ly," said Hannah, settling her cap, smoothing her apron, and looking, to use one of her own expressions, "as proud as Punch."

"No Christmas holidays, remember!" Mary had said to her children at "the Larches," you

cannot both eat your cake and have it, and your summer holiday was an extra long one," and though at first the children thought it rather hard, they decided that "after all it was nicer to have lessons and Miss Mary, than no lessons and be without her;" so that with the exception of Christmas Day, and New Year's Day, Mary had gone to "the Larches" as usual, five days a week; Saturday always being a holiday.

Arriving one Monday morning, Mary was surprised to find no children in the schoolroom; but perceiving a paper in Lady Vicars' handwriting, read, "Please go to the nursery, Ellis will explain."

Now the schoolroom, had originally been the breakfast room, and had two doors, one opening into the entrance hall, the other into a small lobby, from which walking forward, you arrived at the billiard room, and turning to the left, were the bath-room, and two short flights of stairs leading to the day and night nurseries.

"Nice safe stairs, so broad, and not the least

steep, so light too!" thought Mary, pausing to look out of the low broad windows that lighted them, from which could be seen the stable yard, with the poultry strutting about, leaving their marks on the white snow, though occasionally they had to "tuck up," first one leg, and then the other, to warm it, the snow was so cold. But this is anticipating; it was in the nursery, that Mary and the children remarked on the footprints, left by the "Chuckleos," as Edith called them.

Leading out of the night, was the day nursery, both after Mary's own heart—light and airy, the window of the day nursery being nearly down to the ground, but strongly guarded by iron bars, so that the children could amuse themselves, without danger of falling out, if the window were open, or breaking the glass, supposing it to be shut.

Nurseries and nursery arrangements, were a favourite subject of conversation with Hannah and Mary, and they often pitied "th' children of th' quality," as Hannah called them, shut up at the top of a house, in perhaps the darkest and least

ventilated rooms of the whole building. "I should always give the best and brightest rooms in the house for nurseries; for light and air are as necessary to the growth and well-being of children, as they are to plants," thought Mary. Now these, though not the best rooms in the house, were airy and bright looking—"delightful rooms!"—well scrubbed, with good rugs before the fire and window for the little ones to roll on. Fixed against the wall were large glass cupboards, containing toys, sufficiently new or valuable to need care; placed high enough up to prevent the children 'looking at them, with anything but their eyes,' still sufficiently near to be seen clearly, and answering the purpose of 'shop windows.' Many a game of play the children had. Pretending to be 'Poor,' walk past the 'Shop,' and long for its contents, and pretending which they would buy, supposing they had money—it was great fun!

This morning as Mary peeped in at the door, Annette was looking at the pictures in a new book,

a Christmas present, and Edith and Arthur building a house with bricks.

"Good morning, children, good morning, Ellis. Here is a real winter morning! White snow and bright sunshine! Julia is with her Mamma, I suppose? Lady Vicars tells me," said Mary, glancing at the paper that she held in her hand, "that you will explain."

"Indeed, Miss Mary," said Ellis, bridling, and looking anything but the sorrow her words expressed, "I am grieved to say, Miss Julia is *not* with her Ma; nor likely to be, in the state she's in."

"Surely the dear child is not ill! why was I not told before?" asked Mary, much distressed.

"My sister is in disgrace," said Annette, demurely, just glancing up from her book, and then casting down her eyes, continuing the examination of the pictures, as if nothing else was of any importance.

"Poor Sissy, dot - no - frot - on—ony - a paper tat!" lisped Edie, sorrowfully, looking plaintively at Mary with her earnest baby eyes.

"Pray explain, Ellis, I don't understand," said Mary, rather impatiently.

"What the children say is *quite* correct," replied Ellis, with offended dignity. "Miss Julia is in disgrace, and *has* been since Saturday afternoon, her conduct *then* was shameful! and as she *won't* apologize, she is locked up in her bedroom; you can have the key if you wish, Miss."

"Of course I wish," said Mary, feeling very indignant at the idea of her dear affectionate child, locked up since Saturday! and no sympathy expressed with her, except by that one baby voice.

Unlocking Julia's door quietly, so as to take her unawares, Mary hardly knew whether to laugh or cry, at the sight that met her eyes. Julia, with a blanket wrapped around her, as if it were a military cloak, a paper cap on her head, and by her side a wooden sword, was marching up and down the room, chanting "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled!" &c.

"My dear child! What *are* you doing?"

"Enjoying myself, Miss Mary," said Julia,



turning to her a pale quivering face, and speaking defiantly.

“Enjoying yourself—what have you got on your head? What is written on it?” enquired Mary, her heart aching for her darling, yet wanting to understand things before she made any comment.

“A paper cap—and ‘Naughty’ *was* written on it, but I have taken the liberty of changing the ‘N’ into ‘H,’ so *now* it reads ‘Haughty,’” and the wilful girl recommenced her ‘March’ and ‘Chant.’

Mary sat speechless for a few moments, at last gathering the child in her arms, and forcibly detaining her, she said :

“Oh ! Julia darling, how can you be so wicked ! You are *not* enjoying yourself, you look cold, and hungry, and wretched !”

Just for a moment Julia showed signs of giving way, then springing out of Mary’s arms, she said with a laugh, that was more pitiful than tears—

“Oh, I am enjoying myself vastly ! I am having all sorts of adventures : when I am cold, I

pretend I am being chased by wolves, and run round and round the room ; and then I pretend that my bed is a snow-drift, and I jump into it, and burrow my way out at the foot : it is great fun ! And when I feel very hungry, I tie something tight round my waist. I *won't* eat the bread, so I pretend I am saving it for my starving children !”

“ Oh, Julia, Julia, you will break my heart !” exclaimed Mary, beginning to cry. “ How can you talk so foolishly ! how can you be so cruel ?”

“ Am I cruel ? and to you ? oh, Miss Mary, darling, I would not hurt you for the world ! but don't ask me to apologise, for I can't, I won't, I'll die first !” and the silly excitable child, clung round Mary's neck and sobbed bitterly.

For a few minutes, Mary only kissed her and cried over her, then getting a sponge she dipped it in water, and wiped her own face and the child's, wrapped her in an extra blanket, for she was shivering violently, and taking her on her knee said,—

"Now tell me all about it, for I have not heard a word."

"Not that I 'behaved disgracefully'?" said Julia, bitterly.

"I heard you were in disgrace about something you did on Saturday," said Mary, kindly, not wishing to irritate the poor child, who appeared almost goaded to madness.

"You won't laugh at me if I tell you?" asked Julia, her pale face flushing painfully.

"Certainly not, I may laugh *with* you when you are happy, but never *at* you," said Mary decidedly.

"Well," said Julia, reluctantly, "Saturday was wet, at least snowy, and we couldn't go out, so we went into the schoolroom to play, but we hadn't room enough; then we opened the billiard room door, and pretended it was a race course, and we ran round it; but we got tired of that, so *we*—no *I*," said the child, correcting herself. "*I* proposed that we should play being ancient Britons, and the billiard table should be Great Britain

surrounded by water ; we made houses of 'wicker work' with basket work fire screens, and Arthur and Edie sat in them, and Annette and I, each armed with a cue, sat waiting the coming of invaders. Then, Annette said she would get the waste-paper basket, and pretend it was a boat, and come sailing up to attack me. Of course, I had to fight bravely to defend my home and children, so to frighten the enemy I gave 'real war yells,' and Ellis heard me and came down and asked 'what we were doing?' so it came into my head to say 'Ruin seize thee ruth'—you know her name is Ruth—then I added—but perhaps she didn't hear me for I whispered it—'less king.' She got into such a rage, and dragged me off the table, and boxed my ears ! and said she would tell Mamma that I had been abusing her ! and that I had disgraced myself !—I think *she* did, more likely !—then Annette began to whimper and say she 'didn't want to play on the table, only I *made* her !' I never did ! I only proposed it, and she agreed at once, and so I called her a 'Coward !' and a 'Cad !' and she is, she

is ! and I won't apologise, I won't, ! don't ask me, please don't ask me ! please, please !" sobbed the child, clinging round Mary's neck.

"Poor Julia, poor foolish child !" said Mary, tenderly, "what heart-aches you are laying up for yourself, and every one else by your wilfulness. Now listen. To begin with, you were very wrong to play on the table ; the billiard table is too expensive a thing to be used as a 'play ground.' Then when Ellis came down, it was wrong of you to make fun of her, I don't wonder at her being angry, you ought to have had more consideration, she has known you from a baby, and is very good to you all, particularly the little ones."

"Yes," said Julia, doubtfully, then brightening up, "she is good to the babies, who could help it ?"

"It was very wrong to call your sister names."

"I couldn't help it, Miss Mary."

"But you ought to have helped it ; and as you didn't, you must say you are sorry, I'm sure you *are* sorry."

"But wasn't it mean of her, Miss Mary ?" said

Julia, ignoring Mary's remark, "*I* wouldn't do such a thing for the world."

"Perhaps not, dear, and *she* wouldn't call you names,—but this is neither here nor there,—you were wrong and you must *own* it, or you will grieve and disappoint me very very much. Now get into bed, and think it over, I will come to you again in a few minutes."

Kissing her tenderly, Mary left her, knowing that the thought of "grieving her dear Miss Mary" would help her to make up her mind sooner than anything else. "For she is such a tender-hearted affectionate child!" said she, as she hurried down the front staircase and rang the schoolroom bell.

"Can I see Lady Vicars, Croft?"

"Her Ladyship has just gone out, Miss Mary, but she left this for you," handing her a note.

Mary opened it and read, "I am unexpectedly obliged to go to town, must leave you to use your own discretion with regard to Julia."

"Now my way is clear," thought Mary, then seeing Croft still there, she asked, "Can I have a cup

of soup, or bread and milk for Miss Julia?"

Brightening up, the man replied, "Certainly, Miss, I was hoping you would ask for something," vanished, and soon returned with a cup of beef tea. "Cook thinks this might do her good, it is not so rich as soup, and lighter than bread and milk. The dear young lady is famishing I'm sure, may I carry it, Miss Mary?"

"No thank you, Croft, but I'll tell Miss Julia you sent it," said Mary, smiling, for she knew how fond all the servants were of the child.

"Thank you, Miss, you are very kind," and with a bow, Croft withdrew, and Mary ran up with the beef tea, and was glad to see how eagerly Julia ate the warm food.

"I soon put myself outside that—it was good!" said the girl, with a sigh of satisfaction.

"I know it, but you are not 'good' to talk slang," said Mary, shaking her head. "Now get dressed, and come into the nursery, and—I won't say 'apologise,' if you object to the word—but admit you are in the wrong, and say you are sorry."

Julia made a wry face and said, pitifully, "If it wasn't that I know you and Papa would be sorry, I would rather stay here and starve, than do it."

"Nonsense! every one would be sorry for you to starve! make haste, I am in a hurry," and not giving her time to think, Mary helped her to dress.

"Miss Julia has come to say she didn't intend to be rude to you, Ellis," said Mary, as she led the child into the nursery, "and is sorry if you are vexed."

"It was only a quotation Papa often makes use of, Ellis dear, and I said it in fun," pleaded Julia, coaxingly.

"Then why ever didn't you say so at first, and save all this upset?" said Ellis, reproachfully, but she kissed her, and then Julia whispered, "I suppose I was naughty, Nurse!"

"You are often that," said Ellis, mollified, "but somehow you manage to get on the blind side of me."

"Well, I promise not to 'get on' the table again," said Julia, smiling, as in obedience to



Mary's desire, she went down to her practising, only stopping to kiss her dear little Edie, who was "So glad oo dot a frot on."

After she had gone, Mary called Annette to her, and said.

"What was it Julia called you?"

"A 'Coward!' and a 'Cad!'" replied the child, in a tone that signified, she fully appreciated the enormity of the offence.

"It was very unlady-like to call you 'Cad,' I object to the word," said Mary, "but perhaps you will be surprised to hear, that I think she made no mistake, when she called you a 'Coward'."

Annette raised her pretty eyes in amazement, then, seeing Mary's serious face, began to cry, saying, "You always do take Julia's part, Miss Mary."

"Hush, dear, that implies I am 'unfair,' which is not true; just think a little, why did you say 'Julia *made* you do it?'" asked Mary.

"Because I shouldn't have thought of doing it myself."

"Perhaps not, but did she compel you to join her?"

"No-o-o, but I thought Ellis would be angry," said Annette, looking down.

"Ah-h, we are getting to it," replied Mary, cheerfully, "you said, '*Julia made you,*' fearing you would be scolded, so that was cowardly, at all events; sister was not so far wrong. If you will admit you were a coward, Julia shall promise not to call you a 'Cad' again, so come along," then nodding to Nurse, who looked on in silent admiration of Mary's tact, she took Annette by the hand, and led the way into the schoolroom.

"Please, Julia, Miss Mary says '*I was a coward,*' so I am sorry you were punished for calling me one," said Annette, holding fast by Mary's hand to keep her courage up.

"Now you are a dear girl! and not a coward at all, and I am sorry I called you a 'cad,'" exclaimed Julia, kissing her so energetically, that she nearly upset her; always generous and impulsive, her anger was gone directly Annette owned herself in the wrong.

"I begin to think I have been very foolish," whispered the child, putting her arms fondly round Mary's neck, "but I should never have found it out without you!"

"My dear children," said Mary, taking them both in her arms, "You must learn to 'bear, and forbear,' and whatever you do, 'love one another.'"

. . . . .

"Sister Mary, Sister Mary!" cried Mabel, tapping at the window as soon as the welcome form appeared in view, "Fo and me is waiting for you, we're going to tea, to Ducky Grey." This statement Mabel had repeated at least five times, before Mary was near enough to hear it, and continued to do so until Mary, catching her in her arms said—

"That will be nice, but I fear I shall have to carry you; the snow is so deep. Bless you, my darling, sister is glad to be with her!" Indeed, Mary felt, after her exciting day at "The Larches," her own peaceful home particularly soothing and refreshing. "Sir John and Lady Vicars were very kind and complimentary, and I hope it will never

happen again," said Mary, when she told Hannah all about it. "But I must say, dearly as I love her, Julia is very fatiguing."

"Dear heart! but tha' must ha' a bit o' comfort to-night, and forget all about it. Dr. Grey an' his dear lady are so peaceable!" she meant peaceful. "It is a real rest just to look at them."

"You are quite right, Hannah, they are the sweetest couple in the world; I really believe there is not another like them," said Mary, as she brushed out her long fair hair, and put on her "smiling bow," as Mabel called it, and otherwise adorned herself, preparatory to their "little mild dissipation!"

"Fo is lovely, too!" said Mabel, drawing her sister's attention to Doggie's new bow.

"Indeed, I think you all are!" replied Mary, setting Mabel on a chair, the better to admire her, and turning Hannah round, that she might see how very splendidly she was "got up."

"Dear heart, but I feel 'as fine as a fiddler!'" chuckled Hannah, as she surveyed her unusual

finery with modest pride. "Th' cap's thy present, me lamb, an' th' apron's thine," turning first to one, and then to the other of her dear young ladies, "an' as for th' collar-and-bow, dear heart, but I tell't Doctor he'd be takin' me for Queen Victory, when he see me to-night," but he only laffed and sed, "no fear o' that!"

"Any body ready to go my way?" cried a cheery voice.

"Why, here's the Doctor, I do declare! Dear heart, that is nice, tha'll not ha' to carry Miss Mabel, after all!" exclaimed Hannah, exultantly, as she hurried to the door.—"Aye, we're a' ready, Doctor, thank thee for thinkin' on us."

"I'll take the little one, Hannah, you take Flo, and Miss Mary may trip across the garden by herself. Is the door locked?"

"Yes, Doctor, and the key in my bag," said Mary, smiling. "How is it you are not at home?"

"Oh," replied Dr. Grey, carelessly, "I thought I'd drive round for you as the dear old lady was fidgety."

The 'dear old lady' received them with open arms. Wonderful preparations had been made in the way of cakes and good things! The house was quite resplendent with gas, and clean lace curtains inside the scarlet ones, made both bedrooms and parlours look quite gay!

Mary played and sang, and the Doctor and his wife joined in "White Sand and Grey Sand," and "Three Blind Mice." Then Hannah gave them an old-fashioned ditty, each verse ending "Eh, deary me, but times is changed!" which made them all laugh. Then they looked at pictures, and the Doctor danced a jig, and all agreed they had had "a very pleasant evening."

"Dear Doctor! I think he has quite got over his trouble," said Mary, as they watched their dear old friend, go singing down the moonlit garden, after seeing them safe home.

. . . . .  
"Ran-tan, ran-tan!" "Oh dear, what can be the matter!" cried Mary, jumping out of bed. Hannah, with a shawl round her, ran to the door,

and was horrified to see Dr. Grey half dressed, and covered with grime and smoke.

“Will you give us shelter? my wife and I? we are burnt out.”

“Burnt out! that dear old couple, who a few hours before had been so happy! vying with each other who should do most for her, and her motherless girls?” Hannah could not understand it. But when Dr. Grey returned, and placed in her arms, his wife, almost unconscious from cold and fright, she said—

“Dear heart, who would ha’ thought o’ this, last night? It’s well I slacked th’ fire, I was feared o’ o’ersleepin’ mysel’; we’ll soon ha’ thee warm,” said she, settling Mrs. Grey in the rocking chair, and giving the fire a poke. “There’s a nice blaze! we shall ha’ th’ kittle bilin’ in no time.”

“Oh, the dreadful flames!” moaned the old lady, covering her eyes, as if the sight of the blaze was painful to her, “where is Daniel? don’t let him go back to the fire, he can do no good—no good!” cried the poor thing, wringing her hands. “The

dreadful, dreadful flames ! don't let him go again—call him back ! if I lose him, what shall I do ?”

“He has not gone to the fire, he is only bringing a few things out of the carriage,” said Mary. “Be comforted, he is quite safe.”

Coming in just then, the Doctor put down a blanket, containing a miscellaneous assortment of things hurriedly thrown together, and took his wife in his arms.

“Oh, Daniel ! husband ! thank God we are both safe ! and Betsy too, our faithful old servant ? no one is hurt ?”

“No one hurt, but the poor old house, and all that it contained is gone ! and oh, Agnes, Agnes !” said he, calling her by her Christian name, for the first time for years, “I forgot to pay the insurance—and—we are ‘Paupers,’” and burying his face on her shoulder, the poor man wept.

“Such bitter, bitter tears ! it is dreadful to see a man cry !” said Mary. “Oh, Dr. Grey, the Lord who sent you to comfort us in our bitter trouble, will surely remember you, who are His good and



faithful servant ! Don't fret ! you may be 'Poor,' but 'Paupers?'—never !”

‘Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.’

“You have been doing good to others all your life, trust in the Lord ! he will not forget you !”

“Dear heart ! cheer up, Doctor, there is plenty o’ room here for thee and thy dear wife, till somethin’ turns up,” said Hannah, briskly. “Come thy ways, and take thy breakfast, it’s just gone six, and I’m sure tha needs it, after all the fright tha’s had.”

“I didn’t think I should give way like this,” said the Doctor, wiping his eyes, and trying to smile. “But it is hard to feel that my own ‘procrastination’ has turned my dear wife out of house and home.”

“Never mind, dear,” said his gentle wife, patting him lovingly ; “we have each other ; thank God, for sparing our lives.”

“Yes,” said Mary, kissing her soft fair cheek, and smoothing the tossed grey hair ; “I thank God

for sparing you both; and we will try to make you happy, for whatever should we do without you?"

. . . . .

"Miss Annesly has been telling me all about the fire at Dr. Grey's; what a sad thing it is, John," said Lady Vicars to her husband. "They think the gas must have caught the lace curtain in the spare bedroom, when the door was closed. The fire began there, and Mrs. Grey says she does not remember looking in after the guests were gone—the window is on the opposite side of the house—so the Doctor saw nothing of the flames, till it was too late to save anything but their lives."

"A most unfortunate thing to happen to the worthy couple, just as the Doctor has had to pay away all his ready money too!—troubles seldom come singly, he won't get a penny insurance! poor old boy! I am awfully sorrow for him,"—replied Sir John. "I have arranged for his man, and the the pony and carriage, to be put up here."

"That's right, dear," said Lady Vicars; "but what has become of their faithful old servant?"

“Oh, she has gone to her friends!” replied Sir John, but he forgot to mention his own share in the matter. How he had driven her to the station, taken her ticket, and put a ten-pound note into her hand on leaving her. He had also set on foot a subscription, heading it with £100 ; but Dr. Grey knew nothing of it as yet.

It is almost impossible to tell all the troubles and annoyances experienced by our poor friend, not only were his clothes and furniture destroyed, but valuable books, and all his surgery arrangements. Not a minute in the day, but he felt the need of something he had lost, and the knowledge that by procrastinating, he had put it out of his own power to replace it, almost drove him wild.

“To think I have paid insurance on the house and furniture for nearly 40 years, and to be turned into the streets at last !”

Of course, Dr. Grey was only speaking metaphorically, when he talked of the streets, for Hannah made him and his wife, as comfortable as her small means would allow; she gave up her own

room to her dear young ladies, and slept on a made-up bed in the parlour, so that the old people might have the best room, and Mabel trotted after them with 'Fo' at her heels, anticipating every wish.

Mrs. Grey, dear, placid, even-tempered soul ! soon settled down contentedly, happy in her thought that she had not lost her Daniel ; and Mary was beginning to hope that the Doctor would soon be reconciled, when he was taken suddenly ill ; and, knowing how much depended upon his keeping his health and his "practice," made him worse.

"Paupers, paupers !" he muttered continually, as he tossed on his bed of pain.

Mary was in despair, and even Hannah and Mrs. Grey began to lose heart, and 'fear there was nothing but poverty before them.'

. . . . .

"Can I see Dr. or Mrs. Grey ? I understand they are staying here."

"Th' Doctor he's main bad, but if tha'll send up thy name, mappen Mrs. Grey will see thee," said

Hannah, glancing suspiciously at the gentleman enquiring for her guests.

“Never clapt eyes on him afore, that’s certain,” was Hannah’s inward comment. “He’s a gentleman, and looks too pleasant like, to be bringing trouble to the dear old folks—fancy he favours th’ Doctor a bit, nobbut he’s as big again.”

All this time the young fellow was feeling first in one pocket, and then in another, with a bewildered air.

“Ah-h-h, here it is! knew I ought to have one somewhere; but this host of pockets is enough to puzzle anyone,” said he, bringing out a small case from which he abstracted a card; “Give this to Mrs. Grey, please, I feel sure she will see me.”

Dr. Wallace Grey.

“Well, well, I knew he favour’d our Doctor!” thought Hannah, too much surprised to remember to ask him in. Leaving him standing at the door, she bustled upstairs, and beckoning to Mrs. Grey

to come outside the bedroom door, anxiously watched what effect the small piece of pasteboard might have upon her, and was quite satisfied with the result.

“Thank God, where is my dear boy?” whispered Mrs. Grey, her face brightening. “I shall be back directly, dear,” she said, peeping in at her husband; “Tell Mabel, if you want anything,” and without waiting for a reply, she hurried after Hannah, who was apologising to her neglected visitor.

“To think o’ me leaving thee standing at th’ door! dear heart, where was my manners, I wonder? But you must ex-cuse me, for I’m a bit flustered like.”

“Never mind, it is of no consequence, pray don’t mention it, and here comes the dear lady herself—Why Auntie!” taking her in his strong arms as if she were a baby, “what is this bad news I am hearing?”

“We have lost our home, dear, the fire has taken it, Wallace; but what a big strong man you have grown! what a beard! Your uncle will be

glad to see you, that is if he is well enough ; I fear he is very ill, worse than he will admit," said Mrs. Grey, her eyes filling with tears : then, acting upon a sudden thought, she asked, " Are you clever, Wallace ?"

"Self praise is no recommendation, Auntie," replied the young man, smiling; then, comprehending why the question was asked, he added gravely, "I think perhaps I can suggest something to do my uncle good, if I may see him; but you had better first tell him I am here."

"Well, let Hannah get you some refreshment. Hannah!"—calling to her—"Will you give my nephew something to eat, he has had a long journey." Then, as Hannah appeared, she said, "Wallace, this is the best woman in the world, and our most valued friend."

"Thy friends must be my friends, Auntie," said Wallace, offering his hand, which Hannah shyly accepted, shook it warmly, then dropped it suddenly, as if afraid she should hurt it, or it would hurt her.

"Sit thee down and warm thyself, th' mornin's cold," said she, hospitably stirring the fire. "What shall I get thee? Porter, and a bite o' bread an' cheese?"

"The bread and cheese by all means, but no porter,—water or milk."

"Be thee a teetotaller? well, well, but tha's a graidly-looking chap, too!—tha' doesn't shame thy keep," said Hannah, gazing admiringly at the pleasant face smiling down upon her, amused at her quaintness.

By the time Mrs. Grey came to take her nephew upstairs, Hannah and he were quite good friends, and Wallace thought he could well understand his aunt's praise of her: "She seems so thorough and unworldly."

"What friendly breeze has wafted you into this neighbourhood, Wallace? I thought you were ploughing the deep; you find me nothing but an old 'hulk!'" said Dr. Grey, speaking painfully, yet feeling really glad to see his nephew.

"Not quite a 'hulk' yet Uncle, only partially



disabled, we shall soon have you in sailing order, and 'A1 at Lloyd's,'" said Wallace, answering the latter part of his uncle's speech. "Let me look at the chest—Ah-h I thought so, have you any leeches, Aunt—?"

"I sent for some yesterday, Wallace, but he would not let me put them on," said Mrs. Grey, in an injured tone.

"Never mind, he will let you put them on to-day," said her nephew pointedly. "Have you any Glycerine?"

"Not a drop."

"That's a pity, a little Glycerine would soothe the irritation, and stop that little hacking cough, sooner than anything; can we get some?"

"I can," said Mabel, appearing from the far side of the bed, Sister always keeps some, cos I tumble."

"What a lovely child! whose is she?" enquired Wallace, gazing admiringly at the pretty little thing, as she demurely walked out of the room.

"Mine" gasped Dr. Grey, then seeing his nephew's surprise, he added, "by adoption."

"Can anyone take this prescription to be made up?"

"James can," replied Mabel gravely taking the paper out of Wallace's hand, and laying down the Glycerine bottle.

"Speaks like an oracle; but will she really understand what to do? she looks such a shrimp," enquired Wallace, anxiously.

"Hannah will see it's all right, will you help me with the leeches, Wallace, it is so long since I touched one, I feel nervous," said Mrs. Grey, turning pale.

"Leave it to me, Aunt, I'll manage it; just get a linseed poultice ready, to apply when these drop off. Come along my fine fellow, you've had enough, you shall have a dose of salt by and by."

"Oh, Wallace, how can you talk to them! they might be pets!"

"If you had to keep leeches alive through a long voyage, perhaps you would be tempted to make pets of them, many a dinner I have given them off my arm—fact Auntie," said he, seeing

her unbelieving face. But his aunt only shook her head and said—

“Ah, Wallace! you have not forgotten how to draw the long bow, I fear.”

“Is that comfortable? do you feel easier, Uncle?” asked Wallace, as he gave a final shake to the pillow, after all the business of poulticing was over.

“Much easier, dear boy, and if you can only manage to take my practice whilst I am invalided, I shall feel quite content.”

So after a long talk it was all arranged; and old Betty got a lodger at last!

“It’s a small room, but it’s clean an’ sweet, an’ tha’ll be on th’ spot,” which last, Hannah seemed to consider a distinct blessing.

When Mary came home in the afternoon, Mabel and Hannah had wonderful things to tell, of what had happened in this eventful day; and as she listened, she thanked God, that though her friends might still be *poor*, the fear of being *paupers*, had passed away.

## CHAPTER VII., AND LAST.

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### PROSPERITY AND PEACE.

‘MARCH winds, and April showers, had brought forth May flowers,’ before Dr. Grey was sufficiently recovered to go out; and even then, he could only take a short drive, or what he liked better, a quiet stroll, with wee Mabel, and his dear wife as companions.

The ruins of his house had been purchased by an enterprising builder, and rapidly out of the charred pile, a new house was rising, Phoenix-like, from the ashes of the old one. As if drawn by some invisible attraction, day after day, he turned his face towards his lost home, and watched with interest the progress of the new one, “For I cannot fancy anybody having my old garden; perhaps I shall be able to rent the house after all, if they don’t build it too large,” said he, hopefully;

and many a sixpence, found its way from his pocket, to someone else's, to induce the men to be careful, and not to trample on the plants.

Wallace had made quite a name for himself, so successful had he been in several very difficult cases ; and his bright face was welcomed with pleasure, by rich and poor.

"I may as well give you a partnership at once," Dr. Grey said one day, in a joke. "For no one will look at me if you leave me."

"No fear of my leaving you, until you can do without me," replied his nephew, earnestly; and then the subject changed.

'As the day lengthens, so the cold strengthens,' is generally a true saying, when we allude to the beginning of the year, but now, the lengthening days, brought only bright sunshine, and balmy breezes ; and when the sun, taking a lingering farewell, scattered his last rays until the western sky was filled with waves of living fire ; the long twilight evenings, were so soft and warm, and so redolent with the perfume of the roses and

mignonette, that their summer breath strengthened and invigorated our old friend's feeble frame ; and by the time the longest day arrived, he was looking so blooming, that Wallace felt he might leave him with a clear conscience—and accepted an invitation to be present at his sister's wedding.

“I am wonderfully well, and can get on capitally ; nevertheless, we shall all miss you, dear boy,” said Dr. Grey affectionately.

Wallace looked pleased, and turning to Mabel, said, jokingly.

“Will you come with me and be one of the bridesmaids ? We will have lots of fun.”

“I think not ; I don't want to be anybody's maid, but Ducky Grey's,” said the child, creeping into the Doctor's arms, and laying her face lovingly against him.

“Better take Mary, Wallace, she would make a charming bridesmaid,” said Mrs. Grey, thoughtlessly ; then startled by the colour that mantled her nephew's cheeks, and the bright light that

flashed from his eyes, she added, "Or me ; would I do, dear boy?"

"No ;" said Mabel, decidedly, "I cannot spare any of my 'werry owns,' but," she added, regally, wishing to soften the blow, "if you like, before you go, you may kiss my hand !"

"Well done, Queen Mab!" cried Dr. Grey, laughing merrily, "keep the young fellows at a distance."

Bending on one knee, Wallace "hoped her majesty would graciously permit him to kiss her hand even now, though he should not be leaving until the morrow." He looked so bright and winning, as in mock humility he bowed before her, that the child keeping fast hold of 'Ducky Grey' with one hand, patted him on the head with the other. Then, touched by the coaxing look in his bonnie blue eyes, she stooped and kissed him. Hiding her face she said, laughingly, "you have no nice smooth top to kiss, only a door mat," meaning his curly wig. "I had to kiss your forehead ! but Ducky is best ! I can kiss his head all over !"

"Ah-h, you won't steal my darling's heart! Don't think it, young man! though I *have* got a bald pate; even my defects are beauties in the eyes of my Queen!" said Dr. Grey, laughing. "Go and take your auntie for a stroll, 'you shanna hae my wee pet.'"

"Never mind, she kissed me! and I am her sworn knight, now and for ever!" remarked Wallace, triumphantly, as he prepared to accompany his aunt. "Our last walk for a week, Aunt; we must make the most of it."

"You must be sure to remember everything connected with the wedding, Wallace, I shall be very anxious to know how everything passed off, and how Fanny looked, I have not seen her since she was quite a child, she was a sweet little thing then."

"And still continues sweet, Auntie; I don't know that she would be called pretty by any but her 'werry owns,' as Mabel puts it, still she is the dearest sister in the world! and I hope she will get as good a husband as she deserves; but you must not feel disappointed if I can't tell you all



about the toilet, I never can remember what ladies wear," yet as he said it, his conscience gave him a twinge, for vividly before his mind's eye came Mary, as he saw her that morning, dressed in pale blue muslin, linen collar and pebble brooch, her brown hat swinging from her arm, for she would not put it on until she had given Mabel her last kiss, fearing the brim might hurt her.

"The sunlight just happened to fall on her, that is how I saw her so clearly," argued he to himself. "I don't think I ever noticed anyone particularly, before."

"There is no occasion for that thoughtful face, Wallace, if you cannot remember," remarked his auntie, smiling; for the dear old lady, not being gifted with the power of reading thoughts, imagined him troubled by her request.

Just then the small boy, who had shouted "hooray!" at Mabel's first appearance, after her illness, and who had taken Dr. Wallace into particular favour, ran up to show how he had expended his penny, earned by weeding.

"These little uns is real 'stonies,' six for a ha'penny, an' this 'ally taw' cost a ha'penny itself, 'ally taws' is dear just now, they is." Marbles being the rage, for there is fashion even in street boys' games.

"All right," said Wallace, smiling, "mind you don't quarrel over your play, and you shall have another penny, when I come back."

"Going away! you won't be long, will yer? for Mother's not so werry well, she isn't, indeed; and what will she do wivout yer?" said the little fellow sorrowfully.

"I will call to see her this evening, mind you are good to her."

"Yes sir, thank-ee, sir, said the little fellow gratefully, as he ran off to experiment with his "stonies" and "ally taw."

"You will take a many hearts away with you, Wallace, you ought to leave yours behind you, in exchange," said the dear old lady innocently, and then wondered 'why her dear boy looked so uncomfortable about it.'

Everyone seemed to feel the house less bright without "th' young Doctor," as Hannah called him, and as the time of his return drew near, Mabel and Flo ran often to the gate, to peep if he were coming.

"I hope he will be in time to go with you this evening, dear," said Mrs. Grey to her husband, alluding to an invitation to dine at "The Larches." "He will be tired after his long journey, still I should like him to go."

He was in time, and they went; returning about eleven, highly delighted with their pleasant evening, the good Doctor full of happy surprise; for—until he arrived at the Larches—he was totally unaware (though Wallace was not) that the dinner was in his honour, and that a purse of 300 guineas, was to be presented as a 'tribute of respect and sympathy, from his numerous friends.'

"Quite took me out of winding, dear, it did indeed; if Wallace had not been there to return thanks (which the dear boy did in the neatest way I ever heard) I don't know what I should have

done, for really and truly I was tongue-tied."

"Oh, Daniel, how good God is! even our trouble He turns to joy; we should never have known the comfort of our dear boy, if we had not needed him so much."

"True, dear, and our trouble has proved our friends, I had no idea there were so many people in the world who cared for my 'Prosperity.' I shall be able to open a banking account again, thank God."

Many were the plans made for the future, our good Doctor growing young again, as he built his castles in the air.

"If I can only see my way clear to renting our old house, I shall fancy I am a gay young bridegroom again. Fancy us choosing new furniture! won't it be funny? and the dear old gentleman laughed like a boy, as little Mabel commenced singing her favourite ditty

"Darby and Zoan," etc., etc.

. . . . .

"My dear Marion, prepare yourself for a

surprise, or an adventure, or a denouement! I hardly know the right word to use; if you can invent one that combines all three, perhaps it would be better. I feel so exhausted by restraining my feelings for the last two hours, that I fear I shall faint if you don't sprinkle me! Pray don't spare the Eau de Cologne!" exclaimed Sir John, sinking on the couch by his wife, in what he called a "*scentimental attitude*."

"Really, John, you are too absurd!" yet Lady Vicars looked anxious, for she could not feel quite sure how much was real, and how much affected. "Tell me your news quietly, like a dear fellow, and I promise you a plentiful supply of your favourite scent."

"You promise not to faint?"

"Yes."

"Nor to scream?"

"I see you do not intend to be rational, so will leave you until you recover your senses," and much offended, Lady Vicars was leaving the room, when her husband detained her, saying:—

"There, I have got rid of my surplus excitement, I don't wish to annoy you, dear, but I have really been both surprised and pleased. You remember my mentioning Mr. Annesly?"

"Yes."

"Well, he has turned up again, and is the nicest fellow in the world, very gentlemanly, and lots of money; but to make a long story short," said he, seeing his wife growing impatient, "I believe him to be the missing father of our children's governess!"

"Oh, John, how delightful! no wonder you are pleased!" and Lady Vicars kissed him, as an apology for her previous impatience; "But it will not do to make any mistake, tell me all you know."

So Sir John explained, that hearing "Old Brown" (as he disrespectfully called a gentleman, very few years his senior) had returned from the Continent, he hunted him up; and from him learned that Mr. Annesly was in great trouble, at not being able to find his wife and children. He .

(Mr. Annesly) left London for Australia, in difficulties, some years ago, and had never heard of, or from his wife since. Knowing that he set out penniless, to fight the battle of life, and supposing his wife's settlement secure, and that she was living in comfort, he felt keenly her neglect, never dreaming it was anything else.

“ ‘I thought I had worn out her love and her patience,’ said he mournfully; telling his story to old Brown. ‘And no wonder; I must have been mad to speculate and spend as I did. So I determined to make a fortune or die in the attempt; and until that fortune was made, I would be as one dead to her. God help me for a poor vain fool! I make a fortune, and what then? ‘Man proposes but God disposes.’ I return home to find I have neither wife nor child to spend it on, nor to share it with me. At least, if living, I cannot tell where they are. Strangers dwell in the house where I last saw my wife and child. Oh, why did I leave them? I ought to have battled it out at home, and not crept away like a coward, and left a poor

woman to be robbed !’—and here the poor fellow broke down and cried like a child, I believe.”

“How sad !” said Lady Vicars, much affected by this pathetic story. “Did you say anything about Miss Annesly ? what have you done in the matter ?”

“Just invited them both to dinner to-morrow. I trust to your woman’s wit to suggest, or devise, ways and means to bring matters to a satisfactory termination.”

Lady Vicars, sat for a few moments wrapt in thought, and then said,

“I must think it over until to-morrow ; perhaps something may arise, to help me to decide. Bring Mr. Annesly as early as possible, before four if you can,” and though during the evening, Sir John suggested various plans, some altogether impracticable, at least so his wife thought, she still said,

“Wait until to-morrow.”

The following day, Mary felt quite mystified by Lady Vicar’s unusual behaviour—for as a rule, she



was most particular not to interrupt the lessons.—

“Surely she does not fear I am neglecting the dear children, and is watching me,” thought Mary, much distressed; but no, it could not be that; for she scarcely seemed interested in the children’s studies—seemed more inclined to chat about bygone days.”

“How wonderful are the changes a few years make; the rich become poor, and the poor rich—you are only young, my dear,” she remarked kindly, “yet how great your experience has been, don’t think me cruel, for alluding to your past trouble, but I have never heard you say much about your father, do you remember him at all? was he like you? rather, I should say, are you like him?”

“I remember him perfectly. Mabel resembles him more than I do, he was considered handsome, and had lovely dark eyes and hair—he was not like my sister in size, she is *petite*—he was tall and well made, poor Papa!” and Mary’s eyes filled, as she thought of her father, a wanderer in a foreign land.

“‘Tall, and dark eyes,’” that will be a good guide; I was foolish not to ask John what Mr. Annesly was like, still I don’t think Mary suspects—but how can she? I was obliged to find out—now if this Mr. Annesly is little or fair—there is an end to the matter, and I won’t distress him, by mentioning my governess. I do feel so anxious—and unlike myself—shall be glad when it is over!” and Lady Vicars tried to divert her thoughts by knitting; reading, writing, but signally failed, and at last put on her hat and strolled along the drive. “I can turn back directly I catch a glimpse of the drag; I shall be at the house first,” acting on this resolution she had to turn back at once, for the sound of the wheels warned her of the approach of her husband and his friends, and she had not been seated in imposing quietude, two minutes, when they entered the room.

Lady Vicar’s heart gave a joyful bound, as a pair of dark eyes smiled upon her—and a well-shaped head covered with dark hair, courteously bent in

acknowledgment of her husband's rather hurried introduction.

"Mr. Annesly—my wife."

"I must confess," said Lady Vicars, later on in the evening, "I didn't even see you, Mr. Brown—I had eyes for no one but Mr. Annesly."

After a few moments devoted to that unfailing English topic of conversation, the weather! Lady Vicars said, "Will you come and be introduced to my children? they are in the adjoining room with their governess; who by-the-bye is a namesake of yours, Mr. Annesly; is she a relation, I wonder?"

"I am afraid not," he was saying, when Mary caught sight of him, as he entered the room, and with a cry of "Papa, oh, Papa!" clung round his neck.

"Good God! is it possible? My child, my Mary! where is your mother?"

Then seeing she had fainted, he turned to Lady Vicars to appeal for help—

"Get me something, please, don't let her die!

my poor girl, my pretty Polly—I have frightened her—it's the shock—but where is her mother? tell me, is she dead?"

"Lay her on the couch, Mr. Annesly—run away children, and send Ellis—that's right," as Mary gave a deep sigh, and opened her eyes, she will do now. But though Mary had recovered consciousness, she seemed unable to do anything, but cling to her father and moan, "Oh, Papa, Papa!"

"My darling, I am answered; I quite understand, I have no wife; thank God for leaving me a child."

"You have two children, my dear sir—little Mabel was two years old when her mother died, she is nearly seven now—tell your father about Mabel," said Lady Vicars, wishing to rouse her, for Mary's mind seemed almost paralysed by the sudden shock; but the sound of her darling's name, unlocked the fountain of tears—and clasping her hands, she whispered, as the tears rained down her cheeks :

“Oh God, I thank thee for restoring our father. Oh Mother, Mother, if you had only lived to see this day !”

“There, there,” cried the father, soothingly, “tell me about little Mabel, I heard a baby was born, but never knew her name, don’t break my heart, dear, your tears are a reproach to me ; what would I not give, or endure, to have your mother with me ; but we must not be rebellious, but thankful for all mercies ; so I say, thank God for sparing my girls.”

. . . . .

We must pass over the next few hours, and look in upon a happy party, as they sit round the fire in the tiny parlour at Rose Cottage.

“It was very thoughtful of Lady Vicars to propose your spending the evening with us, Papa !” said Mary, “You could not have enjoyed your dinner, if she had not excused you, could you ? And I wanted so much to show you Mabel, and my dear old friends, that I am afraid I should have lost my character for ‘Patience.’”

"That's one of my Peas, I've got 'a Peck ;'" and jumping off her father's knee, Mabel ran upstairs, and returned carrying a small basket, which she exhibited with great pride.

"My Peck of Peas, Papa, shall I shew you one at a time—?" said the child, climbing on her father's knee.

"*I* must 'splain ! don't anybody help me ! P-a-t-i-e-n-ce," spelt the child ; "that's what sister's got ! but not me—now look at the other side, isn't that a beauty Pea ? Hannah says she could shell it ! It grew out of sister's paint box, that's another *P*—" laughed the little one gleefully—"this my 'vegetable,'" continued she, taking up one of unusual size, and gravely reading, "Put-one-o, put-two-o, put-three-o, put-four-o, put-five-o, put-six-o, put-seven-o, put-eight-o.—"

"Rather an extraordinary way to spell 'potato,' is it not ?" said Mr. Annesly, glancing up to his eldest daughter, as if for an explanation.

"It is intended as a lesson in pronunciation, Mabel always had a difficulty with the letter "T,"

she used to say 'bread and buccur,' and 'buccon my shoe;' she was a long time learning to read it, but now she has quite conquered it," said Mary, as Mabel proudly repeated

"Put-one-o, put-two-o, etc.," then, dipping her hand as if into a lucky-bag she said, "here is another — 'pride,' that goes before a fall; and 'pudding,' that's liked by great and small; and here are two sweet ones—'Prayer' and 'Praise' for mornings and evenings, and all our days. Sister says God always listens to our 'prayer,' and for all our mercies, we should never forget to 'praise' His Holy Name;" and the sweet little face that she turned to her father, was so expressive of faith and trust, that he kissed it almost reverently as he said: "God has been very good to give you a sister to guide you so tenderly and pleasantly. You have a wonderful collection of P—'s, though not *quite* a *Peck*, and I think it a very nice way to teach you many useful lessons. Your basket is not quite full yet, I see."

"No, Papa, but I add to it as circumstances

arise, to suggest words. The idea was given by hearing dear old Nurse say, as she often does, 'Tha must pick a Peck o' Peas before tha can do'—this—or that. I think I may give my darling two more—thank God for 'Prosperity and Peace.'"

"Amen," said Mr. Annesly, reverently, as he kissed both his girls; "I admire your grateful spirit, and inventive genius."

. . . . .  
It was golden September when Mary found her father, and now all are again busy preparing for Christmas. The daily visit to 'The Larches' has not yet been discontinued, though it is understood that after Christmas another governess will be needed.

"Whatever I shall do without my dear darling Miss Mary, I don't know; I am afraid I shall never learn from anyone else," said Julia, dubiously. "Not that I grudge you your happiness the least teeny tiny bit! I should be worse than a Hottentot if I did," and the child looked as if she thought



she had hit on a grand simile at last ; " I wish you a merry Christmas, and lots of happy New Years, with all my heart ! but oh, I shall miss you so ! you must often come to see us, and never, never forget us."

" I promise never to forget you, darling," replied Mary, kissing the little loving face, that distress at the thought of losing her governess, had made look even paler and smaller than usual, and the large, tender dark eyes were so tearful and troubled that she added, " I shall always remember the comfort and pleasure you have given me, and hope my dear children will try to be good, for it will pain me wherever I am, to hear that you have forgotten any of my teachings."

. . . . .

At Mr. Annesly's request Hannah had given up her clear-starching, and a woman was engaged to do the roughest work—though she was obliged to go home in the evening.

" Dear heart, if I'd been th' greatest lady in th' land, thy father couldna' be more thoughtful

for me ; my dear lamb was right, her knew'm best when her said as he'd a heart o' gow'd," remarked Hannah to Mary, one day, as she exhibited with pride, the stockings, flannels, and soft warm stuff for dresses, sent by Mr. Annesly.

"He's got a purse of gold, I think," suggested Mabel cunningly, "or he could not buy me such a lovely collar for Flo, with real gold bells, that jingle, jingle, whenever she moves ! I can never lose her now, can I, dear old Doggie?" and the dear old doggie licked her little mistress's face and hands, and wagged her tail, till she might have been the 'chimes,' so musical did she become. Mabel was delighted, but I fear the gratification was confined to herself ; for poor Flo, in her heart of hearts, 'misdoubted they bells,' so Hannah said—and she ought to know, for she had had the care of her ever since Dr. Grey brought her (a tiny ball of snow, in a basket lined with quilted blue silk) as a birthday present to dear little Mabel. "If e'er a han' but th' dear child's had ossed" (she meant, offered) "to put that collar on

th' dog's neck, I'm fain to think it 'ud ha' got a graidly bite. But, dear heart! Miss Mabel can do anything her likes, that her can!" and Hannah gazes with loving eyes at her little love, as she gambols with the wee doggie, her voice as clear as the tone of the bells that jingle round its woolly neck.

Even dogs have their trials, and Mr. Annesly's arrival had been a great trial to poor old Flo; for though a good man, and a kind father, he was not fond of animals, consequently between him and little Flo there was no *rapport*. She did not snap or growl,—at least, not after the first night,—but the wag of her tail was of the very faintest description, scarcely eliciting a sound from the bells that ornamented her collar, and the look she cast upon him seemed, to say, that she considered his room would be decidedly preferable to his company, and when she found that even Dr. Grey, could take so much interest in Mr. Annesly's anecdotes of Australian life, that he forgot to notice her little appealing pats, Flo would seek the first oppor-

tunity, afforded by an open door, to trot off to old Betty's, and wait the arrival of "th' young Doctor," when they mutually consoled one another, for I fear that youthful medico, hardly appreciated the general delight, the sudden arrival of Mr. Annesly had caused.

Dr. and Mrs. Grey were calmly looking forward to a happy Christmas, though the former had experienced a little disappointment about 'his house,' for he heard that it had been sold—and saw great preparations going on in the way of beautifying and furnishing.

"Whoever has bought it, means to spend his Christmas in it ; but never mind, Wife, I am afraid it is larger and would be more expensive than we could afford," said Dr. Grey, "we will wait until the spring, and then look about us," and Mr. Annesly decided that that would be much the best plan.

"I wonder what he intends to do wi' my young ladies ?" was Hannah's frequent remark, but nobody could tell her anything, except that it was a distinct

promise, from the first, that she should never be asked to leave them. "Th' young Doctor was looking kinder lonesome like," Hannah thought, but he always answered with a sweet smile and merry jest, any attempt of hers or Mrs. Grey's to find out if "ought ailed him?"

Mr. Annesly was staying at 'The Larches,' and Lady Vicars and he had long private conversations, and consultations, and when a few days before Christmas, they took Mary into their confidence, that young lady's delight was unbounded. She was in the wildest spirits on her return home that evening. She sang the merriest songs, romped with Mabel, and told exciting stories about the wonderful things done by "Santa Claus" at Christmas time, embraced spasmodically Dr. Grey, his wife, and Hannah, and incited them to wish for all sorts of things "just for fun you know."

"Bless her bright eyes, she seems years younger since her father came home," said all three, in a breath, and it was true, the dear girl felt the weight of responsibility was lifted from her

shoulders, and she was also much relieved to find that her dear father was one she could look up to, and respect, as well as love.

"I want to take you and Mrs. Grey for a drive to-morrow, will you come?" asked Mr. Annesly, as he was taking his leave for the evening.

"Thank you, if the weather is fine enough for Mrs. Grey, I shall be glad, I was thinking that as to-morrow is Christmas Eve, it would be nice to take the girls to town."

"Capital! we will all go then; Lady Vicars has lent me her carriage, so we can defy the weather, we will go a-shopping, Mabel can sit on my knee," and Mr. Annesly looked so pleased at the idea, that Mary, laughingly, remarked "that ladies were supposed to be very fond of shopping, but she thought that gentlemen liked it too, only they wouldn't own it."

When in the morning a box arrived, containing complete suits for each of the young ladies, Hannah's delight was quite touching. "Dear heart, but they just be picturs! they never

needed nothin' to make 'em look sweet, but I do like to see 'em *well* dressed sure-ly."

"I will tell you all I see Nurse," said Mabel, consolingly, for she seemed to think it hard to leave her faithful friend behind. "Papa has given me a shilling to spend ! so I will buy something nice for everybody with it." Mabel's ideas about the capabilities of a shilling, were vague, and in order to please her, Mr. Annesly did not explain ; but let her buy whatever she fancied, and the quantity of beautiful things she purchased with 'her shilling,' was quite surprising, and the child's lovely eyes shone with delight, as treasure after treasure was added.

But more surprises were in store for them ; Papa took it into his head to drive round by Dr. Grey's 'old garden,' we cannot say 'old house,' for a remarkable handsome new one, had taken its place.

"I have permission to look through, so we will just see what it is like," said Mr. Annesly, as the carriage drew up at the entrance.

“ My word, but is wonderfully handsome and complete ; I had no idea it was anything like this ! ” said Dr. Grey, as they walked from room to room, and if any heartache or jealousy was felt, by the dear old man, it was speedily suppressed before it clouded his brow, for said he :

“ God has been so good to me that I must not envy the well-being of my friends or neighbours.” Still he could not help remarking to his wife, as they sat surveying a tiny breakfast room, “ Look, Agnes, this room is arranged exactly as we decided we would arrange our small parlour, tiny work-table, easy chair, rocking chair, and fender stool, all complete.”

“ Yes, dear ; there are other people in the world, who like things pretty and snug, besides ourselves,” replied his wife, smiling. The bedrooms were all explored, and everything from the attic to the cellars, pronounced perfect. Fires were blazing in every room, all looked cheerful and homelike, and the smiling maid who showed them through, said, “ We are expecting the Master and Mistress to-day.”



But the crowning wonder was to come. Taking a key out of his pocket, and looking very mysterious, Mr. Annesly informed them, that "he had still to shew them 'Blue Beard's Chamber,' and he hoped they would not object to his leading them in, and asking them to keep their eyes closed, until he told them to open them."

Treating it as a Christmas joke, Dr. Grey and his wife, smilingly agreed, but "hoped Mr. Annesly would not keep them long; as the family were expected that day, and it would be awkward to find strangers examining their household gods."

"All right," said Mr. Annesly, as he placed Mrs. Grey in a comfortable arm chair, on one side of a warm fire, and her husband in one exactly opposite.

"Honour bright, no peeping, remember," said he, laughing, as he led in Mary and Mabel with closed eyes and puzzled faces. "When I count six, open your eyes. One, two, three, four, five, six!" at the last number, a door was heard to close, and on opening their eyes, they found Mr. Annesly had vanished.

“Why, it’s a surgery, and a very handsome one too!” exclaimed Mrs. Grey, in a slightly aggrieved tone. “I am sorry a doctor should occupy our house, Daniel, it looks like usurping your rights, dear, but never mind, don’t let it distress you.” But her husband is so engrossed with a paper which he has found on his lap, addressed to himself, that he does not even hear her.

Mary has an envelope in which is enclosed a cheque for £50, “to buy Christmas presents,” at Mabel’s feet is a handsome doll’s house.

“Oh, the darling beauty house!” exclaims the child, falling on her knees beside it, “I can knock at the knocker, and ring the bell!”

“What is it, Daniel?” and Mrs. Grey, in obedience to an entreating look, rises and crosses over to her husband. “Nothing wrong, dear?”

“Oh, Agnes, darling, read that, what can I say in acknowledgment of this wonderful, this princely—” here words failing, he put in his wife’s hands the paper that had affected him so much; and which, with no less excitement and gratitude,

she found to be a deed of gift of the house, and all that it contained.

“From a grateful father, as a slight return for many acts of loving kindness to his dear daughters.”

“Where is he that I may thank him?” said Dr. Grey, starting up, intending to search for his benefactor.

“Papa, oh, Papa, how good you are!” cried Mary and Mabel in a breath, as Mr. Annesly—thinking all had had time to get over their surprise—returned to the room.

“Of course I am, but don’t tell me so for fear I should grow vain—not a word—I hate to be thanked,—if you are pleased, I am pleased—perhaps you will give me and my girls a corner, until I can find a nest for myself; and now I had better fetch Hannah, and see if she approves; Lady Vicars will be delighted you are so satisfied with everything, for I owe all to her taste.” Chatting pleasantly, Mr. Annesly contrived to set our good friends at their ease, and they were able to examine the handsome room, which they did with the glee

of children. It was a lofty spacious apartment, and furnished with excellent taste—the chairs and couch, Spanish Mahogany, upholstered in dark green leather; the carpet and curtains a rich crimson—“To give a healthy hue to the pale faces of your patients, Doctor,” said Mr. Annesly, laughing, it was the very beau-ideal of a surgery, and in one corner was a Christmas tree—such a Christmas tree! it reached nearly to the ceiling, and was covered with everything you could imagine that is good or beautiful! and suspended by narrow scarlet ribbon, their pale green shewing distinctly against the dark foliage of the holly, were Mabel’s ‘Peas.’ Two were turned with their letters outward, and Mary read ‘Patience’ and ‘Perseverance:’ above them, was suspended a card, on which—in illuminated letters—was printed,

“Not quite a Peck of P—s.”

“I see why you borrowed my peas, Papa, but you have not got my new ones, I must have two more pieces of ribbon.” And later on in the day when they came to take another peep at the lovely

Christmas tree, they saw shining amongst its foliage—for Mary had frosted the letters—‘Prosperity’ and ‘Peace.’

A wonderfully happy party met together on Christmas Eve, happy in themselves, they had the further satisfaction of feeling that they had made others happy.

No one had been forgotten ; Old Betty had such a goose and plum pudding ! the like had never been seen before in her little house. Wee Tommy of “Ally Taw” celebrity, again shouted “Hooray !” with the addition of “Hip, hip, hip,” in which laudable exertion he was assisted by his father and baby brother. Baby’s attempt was not very successful as yet, but what he missed, was made up by the dear mother’s (who was looking “werry well indeed, Sir”) tearful “God bless them all, a merry Christmas and a happy New Year to every one on ’em.”

And they had a merry Christmas ! Old Hannah in her glory ‘as fine as a fiddler.’ Dr. and Mrs. Grey looking younger than ever, made as usual a

charming host and hostess; Mr. Annesly with Mabel on his knee, his bonnie dark eyes brimming over with joy and peace, watched with pathetic pleasure his Mary, who with rosy cheeks and downcast eyes, sat listening to 'th' young Doctor.' He, poor fellow, as no allusions had been made lately to a partnership, had been talking rather ruefully about "going away." But accidentally discovering that Mary would be "sorry too"—he took 'heart of grace.' And when Mary—not to be behindhand in generosity with her little sister—graciously permitted him to kiss her hand, he made up his mind to have a merry Christmas, and trust in God to give him a happy New Year.

Flo seemed quite to enter into the general rejoicing, her bells ringing right merrily, as she trotted from one to another.

So we will leave them, with heartfelt wishes for a continuance of what they now possess, what they have striven for so patiently, and received so gratefully—God's good gifts—Prosperity and Peace.—

THE END















